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**Becoming Professional:
An Exploration of the Social Construction of Identity**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Continuing Education

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If he [sic] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

Kahlil Gibran

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university

Abstract

Becoming professional involves identity work. The way in which people are 'transformed' into professionals has a fundamental impact on selves, yet the process has received scant attention from researchers. Based on ethnographic research, involving in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis, this thesis examines the social practices responsible for 'shaping' undergraduate occupational therapy (OT) students into professional people.

By situating the everyday experiences of OT students in broader theoretical debates about structure and agency and the social construction of identity, I suggest that the professional person is socially constructed. The process involves being externally defined by others, which has implications for self-definition. However, notwithstanding evidence that becoming professional is narrowly prescribed, I highlight a certain capacity for agency.

The notion of becoming professional is presented as a progressive narrative of the lived experiences of the OT students. The narrative illustrates the tensions and uncertainties inherent in change as students begin to position themselves in relation to varying practices and discourses implicit in OT. Their ambiguous location in terms of the professionalisation process is highlighted through a need for social support that is vital for definition and re-definition of self-hood. Immersion in practice partially resolves the ambiguity of developing professional identities as students learn to respond to its demands. For example, the taking up of caring discourses provides a focus of particular importance within OT.

The thesis contributes to an understanding of professional socialisation at both theoretical/conceptual and practical levels. Social constructionism offers a lens through which professional socialisation may be viewed from an entirely new perspective. Furthermore, increased awareness of the dynamics of the process has implications for the practice-base of OT education. Finally, greater insight into the lived experience of becoming professional may benefit potential students.

Introduction

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the professional socialisation of students who aspire to enter the occupational therapy (OT) profession. Based on ethnographic research the thesis offers some insight into the dynamics of the professional socialisation process. Professional socialisation is defined as

The process by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge - in short the culture - current in groups to which they are, or seek to become a member (Merton, 1957: 278)

Du Toit (1995: 164-165) extends this definition by adding

Not only does it involve the recognition of an assumed identity by the outside world, it also involves individuals' recognition of the identity within themselves and the non-deliberative projection of themselves in its terms

The study focuses on the experiences of a small sample of OT students studying for a Bachelor of Science degree with honours at a university in the United Kingdom. Using data generated from unstructured taped interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis my aim is to transport the reader into the world of OT education.

Rationale

Professional socialisation of students into the medical profession has been a popular area of interest for social researchers since the 1950s (Merton, Reader & Kendall, 1957, Becker, Geer, Hughes & Strauss, 1961, Coombs, 1978). Since these early studies, research on the professional socialisation of nurses (Simpson, 1979, Benner, 1984, Melia, 1987, Du Toit, 1995, Fitzpatrick, While & Roberts, 1996, Howkins & Ewens, 1999), and teachers (Nias, 1986, Su, 1990, Duncan, 2000), in particular, is illustrative of the maintenance of a steady interest in

professional socialisation. Similar research within OT (Sabari, 1985, Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995, Alsop & Ryan, 1996, Tompson & Ryan, 1996) is limited to a few studies that have tended to focus on discrete aspects of the socialisation process, most specifically experience in the practicum, at a relatively superficial level.

Although in general there is a considerable literature around professional socialisation, with a few exceptions, much of the work is descriptive with only a few studies touching on issues of power, proactive involvement of students, or the dynamics of the process. What is evident from previous studies, is the tendency to treat professional socialisation as largely unproblematic, as a process by which people are transformed into professionals. I argue that this perspective is typical of taken-for-granted knowledge stemming from traditions of positivism and empiricism. Research conducted with the aim of revealing the world as it 'really exists' has tended to focus on professions as powerful structural determinants and newcomers as passive recipients of professional culture.

Not surprisingly previous studies of professional socialisation have been inclined to adopt an institutional perspective in terms of exploring the structures in place, such as aspects of the curriculum or the structure of the practicum, which in itself is valuable. Closely related to this work is the literature on professional education, which has tended to focus to a large extent on the development of professional knowledge (Schon, 1983/1987, Eraut, 1994, Eraut, Alderton, Cole & Senker, 1998). However, the vast majority of the work relating to professional education and socialisation has kept the people involved in the process very

much in the background. Certainly, insufficient attention has been paid to the individual person and to their capacity for human agency or to their recognition of a developing professional identity within themselves.

This thesis considers professional socialisation from a new and different perspective. I present a contemporary ethnographic account of professional socialisation inherent in OT education, which attempts to engage with both social processes which transcend individuals and the experience of individual students. As such it provides a unique insight that may be of interest at a purely descriptive level. However, the thesis also represents the realisation of a more ambitious aim to situate the everyday experiences of OT students, becoming professional people, in broader theoretical debates about structure and agency, the social construction of identity and relationality. This depth of analysis is arguably particularly relevant in the current employment climate in which recruitment and retention of OTs is proving to be problematic, provoking concern within the profession (Sutton & Griffin, 2000).

An appreciation of the professional socialisation process from the students' perspective has the potential to add to our wider understanding of professional education at both theoretical and practical levels. To this effect the thesis is written for three different audiences: those whose primary concern is to weigh the theoretical value of its contribution to knowledge, those who are involved in professional education of OTs, and students who, like those involved in this study, feel a need to understand the disequilibrium of change, the tensions and the emotions involved in the journey towards becoming a professional person.

For this latter group, I hope that my study provides some reassurance that they are not alone

Aims of the Research

Professional socialisation appears to be a largely taken-for-granted yet fundamental aspect of professional education that deserves closer scrutiny at theoretical and practical levels. Tompson and Ryan (1996: 69) suggest that professional socialisation is a process “marked by its implicitness”. In response to this statement the primary aim of this research has been to explore the process of professional socialisation in order to understand and make more explicit the means by which OT students are ‘shaped’ into professional people. Subsumed within this aim have been two secondary aims. Having become acquainted with the literature on professional socialisation I was sceptical of the apparent assumption that individuals were so readily moulded into professionals. I began to doubt such simplification of a seemingly complex process. I have therefore aimed to question and challenge the notion of professional socialisation as a matter of routine induction of passive and willing students into the OT profession. My final aim has been to develop an appreciation of the lived experience of becoming an OT. In view of the complexity of the process, which I perceived was likely to involve considerable personal change, I have attempted to explore the ways in which professional socialisation has impacted on the selves of the student OTs.

Synopsis of the Thesis

Chapters 1 and 2 address the theoretical underpinning of the thesis that acknowledges as a key tenet that social life comprises the interaction between the individual and society. Chapter 1 is concerned with the current state of knowledge on professional socialisation, which I argue is primary socialisation in microcosm. The chapter highlights the tensions in professional socialisation between structure and agency, acknowledging that neither position alone can account for how individuals are socialised into a profession. The structure/agency binary is resolved by adopting a social constructionist position, which in its less radical form, recognises both structural influences and the capacity for human agency. I argue therefore, that professional socialisation is a process of social construction.

The nature of socially constructed personhood and its possible consequences are explored and the normative and controlling aspects of socialisation emphasised. However, the capacity for human agency when social life is recognised as a “performance that could be played better or worse” (Calhoun, 2000: 704) involving strategy, is highlighted in the work of Goffman (1959/1971) and Bourdieu (1993). The latter part of the chapter introduces the reader to OT as a profession in both a philosophical and practical sense and provides some general insight into the professional education of OT students. It concludes by describing the local context in which the research was conducted and sets out demographic data on the cohort of students from which the volunteers involved in the study have been drawn.

Chapter 2 maps out and reviews several dimensions of the self/identity theory literature, strands of which are woven through issues of professional socialisation in subsequent chapters. I begin by exploring self as a social phenomenon. Within psychology, social constructionism has signalled a shift in focus from the individual to social processes and human interaction (Burr, 1995) triggered by a perceived inadequacy of traditional psychological approaches as a basis for understanding human conduct (Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994). Social constructionism is based on the assumption that the terms by which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen, 1985: 267), neither inside a person or in social structures.

On the basis that identity is said to originate in the social realm rather than from inside the person, it may seem that social constructionism could not explain the subjective experience of the students in this study. However, Shotter (1997: 8) suggests that 'inner' lives should be re-located in "momentary relational encounters" between people, which he argues are constitutive of their identities. Adopting this stance, I argue that social constructionism can explain how selves can be constructed and reconstructed through discourses and social practices inherent in the process of professional socialisation. Developmental theories emphasising the socially contingent nature of identity are explored in the closing stages of the chapter. However, in addition to considering self as a social phenomenon, notions of unity and plurality and stability and change are highlighted as key dimensions of self/identity, which are relevant in the context of this study. Together, the dimensions illustrate how, within psychology, the self is a highly contested concept. I have found myself faced with the dilemma of

reconciling philosophical notions of self with empirical conceptions of self that as I have come to recognise, are in fact irreconcilable. Hence, the chapter is constructed around the notion of the self as a dilemma.

Chapter 3 provides a reflexive account of the research methodology and the methods employed. The choice of an ethnographic approach is discussed and justified. I explore the influence of my own personal background on the research, particularly the assumptions that were brought to it and which undoubtedly impacted on it throughout its various stages. I will show how my interaction with the OT students resulted in my engagement with my own identity work. An account of how the study was initiated and conducted, focuses on ethical considerations, issues of gaining access and social relations in the field.

The chosen research methods are outlined and particular attention is paid to data analysis which entailed the use of two strategies: an analysis of narratives which involved identifying common narratives across the student OIs' stories, treating the stories as vehicles by which meaning is communicated (Sarbin, 1986), and narrative analysis which involves the creation of a story rendering an explanation (Polkinghorne, 1995). The credibility of the research is considered in the light of a call for alternative criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research. The chapter concludes by introducing the twelve students whose stories gave rise to the narratives on which the thesis is based. The narratives, which provide a means of understanding the students' gradual coming to terms with becoming professional people, are used as themes for chapters 4 to 7. Each adopts a slightly

different perspective but together they represent a progressive narrative of professional socialisation

Chapter 4 focuses on the pedagogy of the OT course and on the narrative of tensions and uncertainties inherent in change. It explores how OT students are confronted with alternative ways of positioning themselves in relation to OT and how as a consequence they experience themselves as a plurality of emerging selves. There is a considerable indication that the pedagogical practices adopted within the course, making it a rich and challenging experience, have the capacity to equip students to cope with future uncertainties inherent in professional practice.

Chapter 5 aims to capture a feel for how the students coped with the transitions, which they began to experience. Moreover, the chapter is concerned with the students' need for stability amidst change and is indicative of their ambiguous position in relation to their developing identities as OTs. The chapter focuses on support that is needed to counter the challenge inherent in becoming a professional person. Highlighting how development and expression of identity are closely dependent on support and encouragement from others, I will use the concept of the 'convoy' (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980: 253-286) to explain how different people stepped into key supporting roles at different times during the journey. The concepts of holding, attachment and embeddedness (Josselson, 1996) provide a framework for making sense of how people provide a unifying and stabilising influence amidst change and as a result also facilitate change.

Chapter 6 focuses on the narrative of learning to care in a professional practice context. The chapter differs from the other three data chapters in that the experiences of two students have been synthesised by means of narrative analysis into a story. The experiences of the two students, who engage in positioning themselves in relation to discourses of caring, provide some depth of insight into how caring is constructed in society, and more specifically in OT. The experiences of a male student challenge stereotypical assumptions about the gendered nature of caring. In addition, this chapter highlights how the need for self-care is crucial for survival in a caring profession.

Chapter 7 illustrates how the students fared within the practicum, the context in which professional socialisation is deemed to primarily occur. The chapter is crafted around the narrative of 'coming to terms with the demands of professional practice', which is explored through a framework of Morrison's (1993) primary tasks of socialisation. The chapter illustrates how students are socially constructed through their immersion in practice and exposure to clients, peers, and most significantly fieldwork educators. However, it also shows how the need for approval and validation from others may result in students performing in accordance with expectations. I argue that such students may comply without necessarily privately conforming to professional demands. In addition, the chapter highlights how several students began to develop a sense of themselves as OTs, making the transition from external to internal self definition (Baxter Magolda, 1999).

Chapter 8 begins by briefly reviewing the main findings of the study in relation to the original aims. The chapter focuses primarily on the ways in which my thinking has developed from my introductory starting position, in terms of substantive and methodological understandings, and highlights how the study contributes to the advancement of knowledge of the initial professional socialisation process. At a more practical level, aspects of the students' experiences are drawn together to inform university tutors and fieldwork educators of the impact of their input on students developing identities. The thesis concludes by focusing on the OT students themselves and on their perceptions of personal change. The final chapter marks a sense of resolution for both the students and myself as researcher while simultaneously conveying a sense of a beginning of another phase for both.

Chapter 1

Professional Socialisation: Theory and Context

Professional Socialisation: Theory and Context

Introduction

Each of us undergoes processes of both primary and secondary socialisation, the former being associated with childhood, the latter with subsequent integration into wider society. However, Jarvis (1983) argues that socialisation into an occupation represents a rather specific process which should be regarded not simply as part of secondary socialisation but as a distinct process in itself, a process of tertiary socialisation. The aim of this chapter is to review the current state of knowledge on professional socialisation through a critique of socialisation theory and to encourage in the reader some unease about assuming that socialisation is as unproblematic a process as may be suggested. Through an exploration of the structure/agency binary I will argue that what it means to be a professional is socially constructed, neither a product of structural determinacy nor individual agency but a combination of the two which is dependent on social interaction.

The implications of socially constructed personhood are explored through the work of two theorists whose work is used to illustrate the potentially repressive and deterministic aspect of professional socialisation and the potential for individual agency. While Goffman (1959/1971) and Bourdieu (1993), both “view social life as a performance” (Calhoun, 2000: 704) that is symbolic of individual agency, Bourdieu’s notion of ‘the game’ also highlights a strong element of structural determinacy within professional socialisation. The final section of the chapter introduces the reader to occupational therapy, the profession that

provides the focus for this study. A brief discussion of the nature of OT education is followed by more specific insight into the local research context.

The Structure/Agency Binary

Professional socialisation is “the process by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge - in short the culture - current in groups of which they are, or seek to become, a member” (Merton, 1957: 278). Despite the existence of a considerable and helpful literature on professional education, incorporating aspects such as the development of professional knowledge (Schon, 1983/1987, Eraut, 1994), the influence of the learning context (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and learning support systems (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 1993), contemporary research focusing on the dynamics of becoming a ‘professional’ and capable of gaining entry to a profession is scant.

I begin by suggesting that professional socialisation is similar to primary and secondary socialisation in that it is concerned with the relationship between the individual and the power of social control inherent in society. Jarvis (1983: 88) defines socialisation as “the process by which the objective world of reality is internalized and becomes subjectively meaningful”. The emphasis on internalisation of existing norms reflects a normative process aimed at maintaining the status quo and therefore enabling society to replicate itself. The strong sense of conformity that emerges is indicative of social control or society’s self-regulation of its members (Cohen & Scull, 1986). Such a perspective supports the notion of structural determinacy as a possible way of making sense of professional socialisation. To adopt this stance would be to argue that the

profession exists as a powerful structural reality in which newcomers are subjected to a process, which is fundamentally dis-empowering as they are moulded into 'good' professionals

This structural analysis, based on assumptions, that social action is determined and more particularly regulated by social structures is reflected in studies of professional socialisation conducted during the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, the 'inductive' approach to professional socialisation, developed by Merton et al (1957) in research on medical students, is based on the premise that induction is gradual and students acquire the professional culture through role relationships. The impact of power relations on the students' roles, the roles of others involved and on the learning process are completely ignored (Simpson, 1979)

Much of the early literature describes a moulding process where student professionals are little more than passive recipients of knowledge and skills passed down to them. In this context learning occurs through didactic teaching methods and more indirectly through example and sustained involvement with experts in the profession from whom students learn their 'craft' (Eraut, 1994: 6). Social control operates through common interests as the professional school induces students into the profession in a way that espouses conformity and therefore maintains the status quo. However, this position does not account for how individuals may be differently or only partially moulded.

Merton's model of socialisation was soon to be challenged by further research on medical students (Becker et al, 1961) and, subsequently, on students in various

other professions including teaching, nursing and social work. An alternative, interactionist perspective was developed by Becker and his colleagues, known as the 'reaction' approach, which recognises people as individuals and introduces an element of individual agency into the professional socialisation process. Focusing on the students themselves and their reaction to educational experiences rather than professional role, the reaction approach is concerned with developing identities. Based on the notion that students will adapt to specific situational contexts rather than learning a professional role common to all practice situations (Simpson, 1979), the reaction approach challenges the notion that a professional role is regulated by cultural norms shared by its practitioners. The reaction approach is therefore less well embedded in structural determinacy than the inductive approach.

Most importantly, the reaction approach acknowledges that social control is a matter of power. The lack of power inherent in being a student has been seen as imposing certain constraints, which are believed to limit feelings of well-being and comfort (Simpson, 1979). Furthermore, advocates of the reaction approach "see students' views as adaptive responses to their subordinate position in professional schools, where they are regarded and treated as students, not as junior colleagues" (Bloom, 1965: 152). Certainly, Becker et al (1961: 436) identified among the medical students a subcultural student culture and recognised that students develop "ways of acting, studying and working which make it possible for them to achieve the goal in the situation they had defined", a process conceptualised by Melia (1987: 10) as 'getting through'. Becker drew attention to how students adapt their behaviour to follow what they consider to be

the most reasonable and expedient route, largely avoiding action that could cause conflict

However, as Foucault (1980 95) maintains, “where there is power there is resistance” Although Becker recognised that the students in his study were operating at a reactive level and within certain constraints, he highlights the possibility of agency and some degree of micro-resistance within the professional socialisation process Abrams’s’ (1992) distinction between compliance and true conformity helps to explain such resistance Highlighting the feasibility of compliance without privately conforming, when personal identity is salient, Abrams theorises the scope for resistance within what Cohen (1994 79) terms ‘socially scripted personhood’, which is a strong concomitant of professional life

Contemporary socialisation theory develops the notion of agency further, exhibiting a noticeable shift in thinking, from seeing the individual as a passive or reactive being, to one of interaction with the socialisation process (Morrison, 1993) Newcomers are portrayed as capable of being proactive in adjusting to their new environment, primarily through information-seeking initiatives, which are believed to help to reduce the uncertainty that newcomers are likely to experience It must be acknowledged that studies supporting the proactive approach (Miller & Jablin, 1991, Morrison, 1993, Howkins & Ewens, 1999) have focused on newcomers in employment rather than on students being socialised as part of their initial professional education However, although there is currently no research supporting the proactive approach in the student sector it

seems likely that many issues, such as entering a working hierarchical system typical of the health professions (Hugman, 1991), will be very similar

The proactive approach confers a great deal of agency on the individual in the professional socialisation process. Yet, if this were to be the case the professional socialisation process would simply be what individuals made of it: a period of training from which people would take what they wanted to take. Clearly, this position gives primacy to the capacity of individuals to shape their own reality and altogether disregards structural determinants, which are difficult to ignore. For instance, Eraut (1994) highlights the emphasis in the professions on moral probity, service orientation and codes of conduct all of which are inherent to the ideology of professionalism.

Neither explanations of agency nor structural determinacy seem to provide adequate underpinning for understanding the professional socialisation process. Similarly, the dichotomy between structure and agency in society in general has largely been recognised as untenable.

On the one hand, society is not a system of immutable and reified structures and institutions operating as a law-like system of objectively organised relationships that determines all action within it. Human beings are not simply cogs in a machine or puppets on a string because they can and do make sense of their social environment, exercise choices in relation to it and modify it in a whole variety of ways, which makes them agents in the social world and creators of social structure. To repeat, social structures are what people do together with one another. On the other hand, they do it in the form of structures and institutions which are supra-personal entities with an organizational basis in conditions other than those simply a product of human need and interest, which cannot be transformed just at will by human beings, and which do have a

regulatory and directive affect on human behaviour in society since they are the basis of its sociality
(Walsh, 1998a 15)

Acknowledgement of the importance of both structural determinacy and individual agency has led to the notion of complementarity of the two positions resolving the classic binary, although the relationship between the two has been conceptualised in different ways. For instance, Giddens (1991) argues for a 'duality' of structure in which structure and agency cannot exist without each other. Structure is defined as rules and resources, which do not exist outside the actions of individuals. As such structure is both the medium and the outcome of the conduct it recursively organises therefore it is both enabling and constraining. Giddens has been criticised for a bias towards agency (Jary & Jary, 1991) whereas critical realists, while acknowledging that structures are not immune from the actions of individuals, privilege structures through the notion of a stratified social reality where structures are paramount (Layder, 1994).

Social Constructionism: A Dialectical Perspective

Social constructionism offers yet another alternative conception of the structure/agency relationship. It maintains that all meaningful reality is socially constructed (Crotty, 1998), such that society forms individuals who create society in a continuous dialectic (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In other words, we are born into a social milieu by which we are influenced and, although we each develop our own realities, an emphasis is placed on the collective generation of meaning. Collective understanding is translated into rules by which individuals live but the capacity for agency means that the rules are likely to be modified over time as new, shared understandings are negotiated. Berger and Luckmann

(1966) argue that individuals, who are themselves socially constructed, maintain, modify and reshape social structures. Shared meaning is shaped by conventions of spoken and written language and other 'social practices' (Michael, 1997: 315). Similar to Giddens' theory, structures are intimately linked to the actions of individuals.

The implications of a social constructionist perspective for professional socialisation is that individuals enter the social world of a profession and predominantly through face-to-face interaction with others, establish what it is to be a professional. The profession has a structure by virtue of members of the profession who structure the events within it (Walsh, 1998a), such as the professional socialisation of newcomers, through shared understandings of what it means to be a professional person. Gergen (1994) highlights how social constructionism traces the source of human action to relationships and the very understanding of 'individual functioning' to communal interchange rather than to intrinsic processes within the individual (Gergen, 1994: 68). I will argue that nowhere is this more apparent than in the professional socialisation process.

The implications of socially constructed personhood are discussed in some depth in the following chapter. However, in terms of the structure/agency binary, following Gergen (1994) I argue that because relatedness precedes individuality it is possible to see how forces of agency are moderated by social constructionism. Social life is responsible to a large extent not only for an individual's experiences but also for how those experiences will be interpreted. Structural determinants are also similarly moderated. Although structures still constrain members and

therefore regulate professional conduct they also enable because members have the potential to debate and change aspects of practice over time

Vanderstraeten (2000: 596) suggests that because “socialisation is not simply the inculcation of societal values and norms, nor the realization of individual talents” an adequate theory of socialisation needs to take individuals and social systems into account. Social constructionism can fulfil this condition. Not only does social constructionism provide a means of escaping the structure/agency binary as it impacts on the professional socialisation process because it focuses on interaction, it also makes sense of the dynamics of the process. What social constructionism offers is the opportunity for the development of a relational perspective on professional socialisation based on the notion that ‘individual functioning’ can be explained in terms of ‘communal interchange’ (Gergen, 1994: 68).

Professional Socialisation as Repression and Liberation

I suggest that the tensions in professional socialisation between structure and agency will mean that newcomers are likely to experience their introduction to professional life as both repressive and liberating. Parallels can be drawn between contemporary thinking on education as an intentional socialising influence and professional socialisation. For example, Usher and Edwards (1994) argue

In effect, there are two separate but interlinked educational discourses. One is to do with social control, maintenance and reproduction of the social order, the transmission and inculcation of

the norms of cultural authority. The other is to do with the realisation of agency and autonomy through developing the capacity of reason (Usher & Edwards, 1994: 140).

Usher and Edwards' recognise the capacity for individual agency as well as forces of social control. There is no reason to suggest that professional education as a socialising influence does not have similar repressive and liberating effects and it is to the nature of these effects and the dynamics of their relative impact on the individual that I now turn. The process of professional socialisation is deconstructed on the basis that the professional person develops in relationship with other people based on the premise that "conceptions of the individual, including what we take to be the substance and content of individual minds - derive from social processes" (Gergen, 1994: 214).

The notion of socially constructed personhood is evident in the work of two influential theorists whose work is helpful in deconstructing the processes that construct the professional person. The theorists are Erving Goffman, who has been termed a constructionist (Woodward, 1997) and Pierre Bourdieu who draws on the work of Goffman and George Herbert Mead. There can be no denying that professional education has the capacity for liberation, for realising personal agency and a sense of self. "The university is, among other things, the beginning of a lifelong introduction to oneself" (Sanderson, 1999: 217) and professional courses, such as OT in particular, endeavour to develop in their students high levels of self-awareness and sense of identity. Both Goffman and Bourdieu "introduce agents as dynamic figures in the social order" (Calhoun, 2000: 704). In preference to seeing individuals as simply rule-following, both theorists introduce an "element of improvisation and adaptation" and [r]ather than

treating individuals as either autonomous or simply socially constructed shared the sense of social life as a performance” (Calhoun, 2000 704)

Goffman (1959/1971) emphasises how people negotiate daily life and make conscious decisions about how they present themselves in the public arena Goffman’s (1959/1971) notion of the creation of a ‘front’ or an image of oneself as an acceptable person makes it feasible to see how individuals may be less malleable and more tactical than theories of socialisation may lead us to believe The individual, Goffman argues, is an actor possessing agency to decide how they will present to their audience and therefore is

a stance-taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organization and opposition to it, and is ready at the slightest pressure to regain its balance by shifting its involvement in either direction It is thus *against something* that the self can emerge (Goffman, 1961 280, italics in original)

Although Goffman maintains that in this way individuals could ‘work the system’ he recognises that complete autonomy is not possible He suggests that individuals function in a ‘contained’ way and are therefore not disruptive but fit into existing structures and expectations (Goffman, 1961 189)

Goffman’s work on the presentation of self has inspired a growing interest in the notion of impression regulation that is an interesting lens through which to consider the professional person as socially constructed Reinforcing ideal impressions, which individuals wish to convey is, Goffman argues, ‘a rhetoric of training’ Furthermore, “[w]hen an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular ‘front’ has already been established for it”

(Goffman, 1959/1971: 24) Recent research has confirmed that impression regulation is a fundamental component of all social interaction and 'performances' are stage-managed and embrace a wide range of human behaviours (Parker & Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1995: 46) As human beings we usually seek to present ourselves to others in the best possible light (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992), we try to present our 'ideal' selves (Hamachek, 1992) or the person we would ideally like to be Cooley (1902: 352-3) maintains that this is understandable and "if we never tried to seem a little better than we are, how could we improve or train ourselves from the outside inwards?"

Nevertheless, research on impression management suggests that people crave accurate self knowledge (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992) and it seems likely that in the context of professional education self-knowledge would be a pressing concern and an essential element of identity development However, strategies aimed at evoking confirmatory feedback, such as selective affiliation with others and staged self-presentations, may possibly lead to verification of self-conceptions, which are "more or less 'truthful'" (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992: 163) This possibility highlights a potential problem with the construction of a personal self so dependent on social interaction

The problem is, according to Harter (1997: 81-82), one of "constructing a false self that does not mirror one's authentic experiences" (Harter, 1997: 81-82) Authenticity invokes a belief in one 'true' self and truth assumes an objective reality, concepts which are both problematic However, empirically, Harter's (1997) research portrays 'false' selves as very real Focusing on adolescents and

adults, her findings suggests that false selves are borne out of a need to seek validation or acceptance from significant others. Support for false selves is also evident in feminist research (Gilligan, 1982/1993, Gilligan et al, 1990). In addition, research on self-consciousness reveals individuals as self-aware authors of their own conduct capable of taking on 'socially scripted personhood', without undergoing a transformation in their sense of self (Cohen, 1994: 79). That false selves may result in the creation of a facade which carries with it the potential for personal tensions (Harter, 1997) may be particularly relevant to students undergoing professional socialisation and adopting a professional 'front' (Goffman, 1959/1971).

Goffman's approach can be termed dramatological or 'game like' (Anderson, 1990). Similarly, Bourdieu's (1993) favourite metaphor for social life is to see it as a game revolving around power relations. He too emphasises individual agents as dynamic within the social order, capable of strategic thought and action, although he recognises that individuals tend to reproduce the social order rather than challenge it to any great extent. The concept of 'the game' is derived from the notion of 'fields' within which certain stakes and interests exist. Bourdieu (1993: 72, *italics in original*) maintains

In order for a field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes and so on.

In the context of this study, the field would be the profession and the *habitus* the sense of what it is to be a professional person, based on ideas about capabilities, beliefs and values, derived from the history of the OT profession and from its

position in the medical hierarchy Professional socialisation could be deemed to be concerned with developing an understanding of the field and learning to play the game

Bourdieu maintains that games involve strategy and extend beyond simply following the rules to developing a sense as an individual of how to play This sense, he suggests, is acquired through experience and forms the habits or habitus of each individual or the capacity to improvise the next move (Calhoun, 2000)

However, There are undercurrents of repression in playing the game if it is simply a matter of fitting in, as the inductive approach suggests it is (Merton et al, 1957), and indeed, Bourdieu has been criticised for reifying social structure (Jenkins, 1992)

In fact, Bourdieu espouses a dialectical relationship between structure and agency, maintaining that structures can be explained in terms of the ways in which they are produced and reproduced through action Furthermore, he maintains that the ways in which human beings act are the result of practical dispositions that they develop through their experience of objective structures (Calhoun, 2000) The notion of playing the game recognises some scope for individual agency although at the same time 'emphasising structural determinacy within the professional socialisation process As such it can be helpful in making sense of how students negotiate their way through the professional socialisation process

The consequence of being immersed in social practices, for instance, within the practicum, is that they provide students with feedback that is internalised according to professional and societal norms. In embarking on a course leading to a professional qualification students may expect a certain degree of scrutiny as progress is monitored. In fact, Mayer (1986) suggests that in such situations where individuals have opted to engage with change there is an increase in the importance of psychological rewards and punishments. Students are therefore more likely to be sensitive to feedback, which can come, from clients and peers as well as from educators. Therefore other people subtly model students' very selves around what the profession demands from its members.

In effect, newcomers to a profession gradually internalise the values and beliefs of members of that profession and therefore become subject to social control at a largely unconscious level. It is feasible to equate this process with colonisation or subtle indoctrination as the individual is enveloped by the influence of various discourses, hardly aware of changes to their own identity. Therefore it could be argued that professional socialisation is a process through which individuals are socially constructed and largely moulded into conformity. However, interpretation of professional socialisation in terms of internalisation alone presents only a partial explanation. The possibility of resistance is ever present where power differentials exist between those that seek and those that have already acquired professional status.

The importance of regulation and control within a profession cannot be underestimated. There can be no mistaking that ultimately the 'game' is

prescribed by the profession and those who wish to join that profession need to adapt accordingly to gain membership. However, by highlighting a more agential approach to social life it is possible to argue that there is the capacity for individual agency within the socialisation process. I will illustrate in later chapters that contemporary professional socialisation is not merely a matter of conformity but of compliance as individuals learn to improvise and adapt to the expectations surrounding professional status. As such this research suggests that professional socialisation involves a more complex process involving some degree negotiation by individuals than has been suggested in the past.

Defining Occupational Therapy (OT)

OT, like physiotherapy, podiatry and speech and language therapy, falls under the umbrella term of the 'Professions Supplementary to Medicine' as 'paramedical professions', or 'allied health professions'. These labels confer a traditional perception of male-dominated, non-graduate, low paid work, possessing a subordinate status in the medical hierarchy and vocational in the sense that a high degree of commitment is a prerequisite (Bines, 1992).

The paramedical professions share salient features such as size. When compared to nursing, for example, they are small and therefore lack political power. They are also hierarchical, with levels of accountability related to pay, giving a framework for structured progression much like the medical profession from which they take their lead. During the 1980s, like other healthcare occupations, OT's sought to raise the status of their occupation from a semi-profession to a profession therefore gaining the right to self-regulate and escape medical

dominance. Nevertheless, medical domination has until very recently totally governed referral processes and even the treatment approach adopted, although there is now increased recognition of the rigour of undergraduate education and the expertise of qualified practitioners. Initial training for all of the allied health professions is at degree level which involves a substantial theoretical component and a period of time spent in practice in the workplace supervised by experienced clinicians.

Collectively, the allied health professions are a gendered labour market. Although the predominance of women can be explained by a combination of factors, such as training opportunities and pay scales, it is the perception of a practice strongly focused on caring that labels it as 'women's work'. This perception may also influence poor recruitment from ethnic minority groups (Rowe & MacDonald, 1995). Making a useful distinction between caring as a commitment and caring as a task, Hugman (1991) suggests that professions such as OT, where caring as a commitment is combined with practical hands-on care, are likely to be undervalued since "caring for is seen as less expert, it is women's work" (Hugman, 1991: 12). Men in remedial therapies are likely to experience themselves as working in a woman's profession. However, typical of the gendered labour market, a high proportion of the small number of men in the OT profession occupy the more senior ranks and, in fact, see OT as "an opportunity to achieve leadership positions" (Ryder & Brashear, 1988: 236).

How does OT differ from other healthcare professions?

More in-depth insight into OT reveals a profession with something very different to offer its clients. Several key features which impact on initial training single OT out from other healthcare professions. Originating in the USA and introduced to the UK in the 1930s, OT was influenced by the art-and-crafts movement and rooted in an anti-scientific critique of medicine (Hugman, 1991). As such, OT did not and still does not blend easily with pure scientific basis of medicine that underpins physiotherapy, for example. However, there is internal debate over the theoretical base of OT. According to Punwar (1994), degree status resulted in an increased focus on science and research that had the effect of threatening the artistic aspect of practice. The artistic emphasis is said to symbolise “a concern with human values rather than treatment procedures” (Peloquin, 1989: 219-226). Jenkins & Brotherton (1995: 332) stress that the approach adopted by OT’s “does not revolve around abstract principles but on real life situations”.

Nevertheless, others have favoured the abandonment of artistic origins in favour of a rational, scientific approach, which they felt would provide professional legitimacy (Mocellin, 1988). What has transpired is a blend of practice underpinned by both scientific and social models of health in which there is recognition that abstract rationality cannot be a substitute for knowledge embedded in local contexts.

Undergraduate OT courses are given the task of drawing from both scientific and social science knowledge to equip students for practice, which, as I discuss in chapter 4, creates some difficulties for students who have to reconcile often

conflicting messages at an individual level. Such fundamental tensions are less likely to trouble physiotherapy students for example, where the balance of course content is weighted in favour of scientific knowledge and technical competence. However, one might say that OT's engage with their patients in a far more holistic sense and that initial education must therefore reflect this approach.

The debate over the nature and purpose of OT remains contentious even in the late 1990s (Ryan, 1998) and is blamed for a weak sense of professional identity which makes OT's vulnerable to having their role and function defined by others (Creek, 1998). While the scope of professions, such as physiotherapy, is easily defined and practice confined within certain boundaries, OT has been more pragmatic and less sceptical about incorporating 'alternative' approaches to patient management. In addition, practice that incorporates working with physical and/or psychological impairment, in areas as diverse as forensic medicine and elderly rehabilitation, means that initial education must prepare students for and expose them to the rich diversity of demands typical of professional life. Such diversity is unique to OT. For example, although a small number of physiotherapists now work in mental health the emphasis in most healthcare profession is on dealing primarily with physical injury or impairment. Initial education must ensure that there are opportunities for students to develop interests in diverse areas, which, in the case of the course at the centre of this study, is facilitated by the modular structure and the incorporation of option modules (see Appendix 1).

Furthermore, whereas the majority of other healthcare professionals are based in hospitals or health centres where the support and guidance of colleagues is at hand, OT's can be found in a wide range of situations frequently working single-handed or in small departments. This necessitates a greater degree of resourcefulness and self-reliance that must be nurtured at undergraduate level and, although these attributes are desirable in all healthcare professionals, for OT's they are essential skills, which must be developed through the undergraduate curriculum.

Boundary disputes with other professionals, such as physiotherapists involving themselves in aspects of OT work, are not uncommon and in the past have led to calls for a merger into a generic remedial therapy profession, which have hitherto been resisted (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 1988). The lack of recognition of OT as contributing something very specific to patient care may be attributable to a focus on everyday activities that would seem to an outsider to be simplistic, bellying the skill and clinical reasoning underpinning interventions. Another implication of the perception that OT addresses basic needs is that it is seen as being non-academic, not requiring intellect. The effect is to attract potential students who are frequently artistic or good at creative activities who consider themselves to be less able in an academic sense, a perception that I highlight in relation to this study in chapter 7. This impression is further enhanced by wide admission gates, which allow entry to students with varied academic achievement from higher degrees to Access, BTEC and GNVQ qualifications (see Appendix 1). Again, in this sense OT differs greatly with other healthcare professions who

have gradually increased their academic profile by increasing their entry requirements, for example, in terms of 'A' level grades

In terms of philosophy OT is distinct from other healthcare professions The following definition captures the essence of OT practice

OT is the treatment of people with physical and psychiatric illness through specific selected occupation for the purpose of enabling individuals to reach their maximum level of function and independence in all aspects of life The OT assesses the physical, psychological and social functions of the individual, identifies areas of dysfunction and involves the individual in a structured programme of activity to overcome disability The activities selected will relate to the consumer's personal, social, cultural and economic needs and will reflect the environmental factors which govern his/her lifestyle (College of Occupational Therapists, 1993a 2)

The definition reveals a philosophy of client-centeredness, a belief in the individual as unique and possessing potential and recognition of a need for an enabling role in the context of the existence of inequalities in terms of health and welfare in society It may seem to say more about service-users than OT's, although it may be considered an accurate reflection of OT philosophy Jenkins & Brotherton (1995 335) suggest that

[t]he notion of client worth and quality of place has always existed in the profession It is believed that occupational therapy does not rest on the conventional practitioner/client relationship which is that of the dominant and the subservient, rather, it depends on the concept of professional democracy where both client and professional expertise is acknowledged

In agreement, Kielhofner (1997 86) suggests that the emerging paradigm in OT incorporates the rejection of hierarchical models and the valuing of the clients perspective, making it non-normative Clearly this philosophical stance has an impact on undergraduate education, which emphasises the moral and ethical aspects of practice to a far greater degree than other healthcare professions,

possibly with the exception of social work education. For instance, the emphasis in OT on equity and empowerment means that policy issues such as human rights legislation are important inclusions in the curriculum.

The recently published 'NHS Plan' (Department of Health, 2000) highlights that changes are required in the way all NHS staff work, most specifically the necessity for a much greater emphasis on interdisciplinary working between allied health professionals. However, a collaborative multidisciplinary approach has been a key tenet of OT for some time and is a distinct feature of OT due to the nature of the clients with whom OT's work. Dealing frequently with profound disabilities necessitates valuing the contributions of other healthcare professionals, which is by necessity embedded in OT undergraduate education (see Course Philosophy - Appendix 1). While it could be argued, for example, that physiotherapy students are encouraged to develop an appreciation of other professions, at present physiotherapy is more inward looking than is desirable to take forward planned initiatives such as intermediate care.

Organisation and Monitoring of OT Undergraduate Education

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) sets minimum standards for OT education. Professional education of OT's in the UK is guided and monitored by the professional body, the College of Occupational Therapists (COT) based on the recently revised philosophy of WFOT (1998). The Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM) is empowered through the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act (1960) with the authority to register all health professionals. Regulation of the health professions is currently

undergoing reform and the Health Professions Council will shortly replace the CPSM. However, registration with the CPSM currently confers a licence to practice. Together, these two bodies responsible for maintaining professional standards jointly validate all educational programmes leading to state registration in the UK.

Each programme is submitted to the validating bodies for re-approval at five yearly intervals (COT/CPSM, 1992), allowing courses to adjust and up-date in accordance with policy changes both in practice and in higher education. With the move into higher education, OT became an all degree profession (Alsop & Ryan, 1996). Many diplomates have since completed 'top-up' degrees although some clinicians still in practice are likely to hold diplomas. This can be a concern for clinicians without degrees, who finding themselves involved in student education in the practicum, feel themselves to be inferior often despite being specialists in their fields (Alsop & Ryan, 1996).

The move into higher education gave rise to a perceived shift in focus favouring theoretical knowledge over more practical hands on experience, which predominated when OT education was hospital based (Hugman, 1991). However, service providers, as well as the professional body, remain important stakeholders in shaping the educational process. Not surprisingly tensions between these stakeholders and educational institutions do exist. For instance, according to Bines and Watson (1992) professional bodies are particularly concerned about the professional socialisation of students, able to choose their own route through a programme and studying possibly at their own pace, and the

inculcation of the professional culture. More recently, Barnitt and Salmond (2000), reporting the findings of a large study of new graduates and their employers, highlight how views on what the newly qualified professional should know and be able to do are often conflicting. Employers seem to suggest that in some cases preparation is inadequate. However, in addition, employers also express a concern over the selection procedures of students for OT education (Barnitt & Salmond, 2000).

Interpretation of the core curriculum (COT, 1993a) means that each programme within the UK may differ in how it structures the learning experience of its students. However, the centrality of the 'practicum' (Schon, 1987) or the context of fieldwork, to the development of competence to practice, is reflected in the devotion of what amounts to a third of all courses to fieldwork education. The integration of fieldwork education with the educational programme, as opposed to being treated as a supplementary feature, has meant that fieldwork has become established as equal to academic studies within the university system (Alsop & Ryan, 1996). The practicum provides a context for learning in the workplace

that approximates a practice world, students learn by doing, although their doing usually falls short of real-world work. They learn by undertaking projects that simulate and simplify practice, or they take on real-world projects under close supervision. The practicum is a virtual world, relatively free of the pressures, distractions, and risks of the real one, to which nevertheless it refers. It stands in an intermediate space between the practice world, the 'lay' world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy (Schon, 1987: 37).

Despite Schon's suggestion that students are insulated from the full responsibilities of the workplace and perceive that the practicum is a safe haven, which rang true for the students in this study, research suggests that it does allow

students to gain insight into the reality of work and the pressures of the work environment (Alsop, 1991)

The WFOT (1998) standards for fieldwork education make a number of stipulations regarding the quality of student experience within the practicum. They state that each student must complete a minimum of 1000 hours of fieldwork supervised by a qualified occupational therapist. This person is known as a fieldwork educator and is also responsible for assessing the student while on placement. Guidelines from COT (1993b) authorise alternative models of student supervision, such as one student to one educator, group and long-arm models. Exposure to a variety of settings providing services to individuals with different types of needs, including clients of different age groups and with acute, long-term and degenerative conditions and in different organizational settings, is also stipulated. The diversity of setting in which OT's work and fieldwork placements occur include hospitals, health and social care settings, such as day centres, refuges and 'drop in' centres, community centres, social services, education, industry and the voluntary sector (Alsop & Ryan, 1996). Within these settings each student should receive a graded exposure to treatment through observation and directed practice, progressing to supervised independent practice with a caseload of clients (WFOT, 1998).

According to the COT (1993a) the purpose and aims of fieldwork are manifold. Most importantly, students are afforded the opportunity to implement the OT process allowing the integration of theoretical and practical learning. However, not only does the practicum facilitate consolidation of previous learning, it

provides opportunities for new learning and promotes skills of reflection and analysis impacting on reasoning capabilities and judgement (Alsop & Ryan, 1996) In addition, it facilitates multi-professional collaboration In essence, the fieldwork component of OT education promotes “professional competence, confidence and identity” (COT, 1993a 15)

The WFOT (1998) standards cover a wide range of issues relating to professional education and professional programmes The stipulations for professional education set down by WFOT in conjunction with the professional body and CPSM are, as might be expected, narrowly and fairly rigorously followed Not only is this vital to ensure consistency of experience between a large number of universities it also maintains the integrity of the professional ideology of OT

The Local Research Context

This thesis focuses on the experience of twelve students over a period of three years from 1996 to 1999 The students were engaged in a Bachelor of Science degree with honours in Occupational Therapy, in one of the twenty-six UK universities offering OT (COT, 1999) In the ‘Directory of Occupational Therapy Courses’ the course is described as having been “designed to provide an educational foundation for ongoing personal and professional growth appropriate to the preparation of an occupational therapist” (COT, 1999)

The programme offered to the students in this study was revalidated in 1995 It was therefore well established when the study was initiated in 1996 The course philosophy (see Appendix 1) reflects the philosophical premises on which the

profession is based, in terms of the centrality of occupation, the promotion of a client-centred approach, the importance of multidisciplinary working and the recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of health. The course philosophy states

The course will be founded upon the principles of empowerment and the promotion of individual responsibility for learning, growth and accountability thus preparing graduates for the rapidly changing health and social care environment
(1995 BSc Honours Degree in Occupational Therapy Course Document, page 6)

The emphasis on self-directed learning, critical appraisal, problem-solving skills, self-awareness, resourcefulness and autonomy highlight an expectation that students will achieve a state of advanced cognitive development

The course rationale makes explicit the diversity of knowledge on which OT is founded. Alongside the hard science subjects such as anatomy and physiology students study social science subjects, technology and research. As suggested earlier in this chapter, each school of OT will interpret the core curriculum (COT, 1993a) in a slightly different way. In privileging the adoption of a social model of health, in preference to the medical model, the course rationale for the course at the centre of this study emphasises the social science perspective, which some students perceived as problematic. In chapter 4, I will show how the tensions between the social and scientific underpinning of OT, evident in debates in the literature and in course documentation, created uncertainties for the students. These uncertainties were further compounded in the practice setting, in which formal and experiential knowledge were weighted differently by fieldwork educators. The course document emphasises the importance of experiential

learning, through the teaching approach adopted in university modules, and most specifically through fieldwork education. However, there is also an emphasis on foundational knowledge with modules over the three year course being grouped under three themes: *knowledge base*, which draws on biological sciences, social sciences, medical science, technology and management, *the theory and practice of OT*, which draws on the philosophical base, principles of treatment, intervention and professional issues, and *research*.

The course rationale reflects the relational nature of OT, by stressing the extent to which OT's work in collaboration with their clients, and the extent to which OT's need to work with other therapists. The notion of OT being a caring profession is implicit throughout course documentation, although care at the level of hands-on care-giving is not afforded much in the way of attention despite constituting a substantial aspect of the student experience as I illustrate in chapter 6. It is feasible that explicit reference to care-giving tasks would risk detracting from the image of OT, as it is portrayed in course documentation that may account for the implicit nature of the discourse.

While highlighting the relational nature of OT, an identified aim of the course is to produce independent and "autonomous OT practitioners" (1995 BSc Honours Degree in Occupational Therapy Course Document, page 7). These messages that can be perceived as conflicting were confusing for some students as I discuss in chapter 4. Conversely, very clear messages are conveyed through course aims and objectives about the need for the development of a high degree of personal awareness that is facilitated through such modules as 'Interactive Skills' at levels

1 and 2 (see Appendix 3 - Level 1 Module Descriptor) The development of reflective capabilities is facilitated throughout the course by means of teaching methods adopted in certain modules, a personal profiling system (see appendix 4 – Personal Profiling Documentation) and the encouragement given to keeping a professional diary I discuss in chapter 4 some of the students' perceptions about reflection and its relationship to the achievement of competence, which is clearly an overarching aim of the course

Course Structure

The modular framework is seen as a means of providing flexibility through a programme of study designed to equip students for employment in the context of rapid change in socio-economic and health and social care environments To further enhance flexibility the course is offered on a part-time as well as a full-time basis although numbers on the part-time route are small The full-time route through the OT course comprises twenty-four modules studied over a period of three years (see Appendix 1 for an Overview of Course Structure and Content)

The three blocks of fieldwork, which alternate with blocks of time in the university, provide the opportunity for the integration of theory and practice Fieldwork placements increase with duration as the course progresses from a six week placement at the end of year one, a ten week placement in year two, and a fourteen week placement in the final year of the course The placements are structured to provide an initial broad foundation in the first year, followed by a greater depth of insight into more specific fields of practice in subsequent years As is standard practice in all OT courses, students are allocated a fieldwork

educator who is responsible for them while on placement (see Appendix 2 – Fieldwork Educator Responsibilities) It will become increasingly evident as this thesis unfolds that the nature of the relationship between students and fieldwork educators is crucial to the development of the students' sense of competence and professional identity

Opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction, with physiotherapy, nursing, social work and dietetics students, occur throughout the three years of the course through designated 'Shared Teaching and Learning Modules' In addition, students are offered a considerable element of choice through Core Options modules and Free Choice modules The range of topics covered by Core and Free Choice modules (see Appendix 1) give some indication of the means by which students can follow a specific pathway through the course In this respect OT education is similar to nurse education although nursing adopts the notion of pathways more formally through a branch system whereby nursing students complete a common foundation course and then specialise

Most other healthcare professions, such as physiotherapy, tend to offer generic training at undergraduate level with specialisation at postgraduate level Again, OT schools are likely to differ slightly in their philosophy on the breadth of experience offered to students However, the availability of alternative pathways for the OT students in this study results in diverse preparation for particular aspects of practice, such as mental or physical health For example, a student interested in working in a physical setting would be likely to select modules such as 'Human Movement' and 'Orthotics', while another interested in mental health

may select modules such as ‘Therapy in a Secure Setting’ and ‘Specialist Areas in Psychiatry’ I illustrate in chapter 4 how students began to identify with particular aspects of OT such as mental health and eventually came to recognise that they would all leave the course with slightly different attributes, a fact that initially the students found hard to understand and accept

General Profile of Research Sample

The profile of students recruited to the full-time route in 1996 is displayed in table format below Table 1 shows the diversity of entry routes into the course reflecting a wide admissions gate and the equal opportunities policy of the university

Entry Route	No.	%
First Degree	9	11
A Level	38	41
BTEC	7	7
Access	20	22
GNVQ	10	11
Other	5	6
Total	89	100

Table 1 Entry routes to the course for 1996 Student Cohort

The course admissions statement (see Appendix 1) highlights the need for the attainment of a minimum academic standard as a prerequisite for entry to OT, while also indicating that offers will be made on the basis of individual attributes However, as discussed previously disparity in prior educational achievements may account for some of the students’ uncertainties in terms of their academic ability

Table 2 classifies the students according to their age

Age	No.	%
18 years	25	28
19-21 years	22	24
22-25 years	13	16
26 years +	29	32
Total	89	100

Table 2 1996 Student Cohort by Age

Table 3 shows mature students (21 years or above) as a percentage of the whole student cohort

Mature sts	No.	%
21 years +	44	50

Table 3 Mature Students as a Percentage of the Cohort

Underpinning the notion of the need for a wide admissions gate the stance adopted by WFOT (1998) on the selection of OT students is that

Selection [of students] should not be based on academic qualifications alone candidates having wider general experience may make a considerable contribution to the profession (WFOT, 1998 27)

The standard favours mature applicants, that is translated into general literature for prospective applicants within the UK (COT, 1999) and is certainly reflected in the recruitment statistics for the course at the centre of this study

Table 4 shows numbers of female and male students recruited to the course in the same year These statistics reflect the predominance of women in training and in the profession There is acknowledgement within the course document that men and candidates from ethnic minority groups are under-represented on the course, as they are in other healthcare professions (1995 BSc Honours Degree in

Occupational Therapy Course Document) Data on the ethnic composition of the course were not available

Sex	No.	%
Female	78	88
Male	11	12
Total	89	100

Table 4 1996 Student Cohort by Sex

All twelve students involved in this study were full-time students. Only ten of the students actually completed the course and their involvement in the study. One male student died suddenly during the second year of the course and another woman withdrew to care for her terminally ill mother and did not return. These students provided some valuable insights into the experience of becoming OT's and for this reason and for their commitment to the research, their thoughts and experiences have been included in this thesis even though they failed to reach their ultimate goal.

The twelve students were from the UK and were all white. In recruiting eight women and four men to the study I began with a higher percentage of men than expected from the profile of the year group by sex. As may have been predicted from both course and national statistics, which suggest that OT attracts increasing numbers of mature applicants (Crak & Alderman, 1998), ten of the twelve students were over 21 years of age. Although this proportion seemed to be high I reasoned that it might reflect the research focus, which could be of greater interest to more mature students. I did realise, however, that the maturity of the students was a factor that I needed to take into account throughout my analysis.

Consequently the impact of maturity is highlighted specifically in chapter 5, in terms of support systems, and in chapter 7, with reference to problems associated with an identity that is heavily influenced and externally defined by other people. In chapter 3 I introduce the students, each of whom have either chosen or been given a pseudonym.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to establish both the broader context of professional socialisation in contemporary society and to introduce the reader to the more specific context of OT and OT education. In addition, some insight into the course central to this study and into the profile of the cohort of students from which volunteers were drawn has been established.

The professional socialisation process has been explored in terms of its capacity for structural determinacy and for individual agency. The adoption of a social constructionist approach to the binary between structure and agency provides a means of understanding how individuals construct their profession, which in turn constructs individual professionals. This process is inherent to professional socialisation, which is mediated by social interaction. The notion that social interaction provides the mechanism for professional socialisation is not novel. Similar suggestions have been made (Lave, 1988) although the dynamics of the process remain unclear.

I have alluded to the capacity of individuals to improvise and adapt in a social context. My aim in subsequent chapters is to explore these processes in some

depth and to highlight the relational nature of the professional socialisation process with reference to my own research. However, prior to progressing with a social constructionist analysis of professional socialisation, which gives primacy to relationships over individuality, I engage with the literature on self/identity theory. The self/identity literature provides a means of understanding in greater depth how the process of professional socialisation might impact on the selves of the students who commit themselves to becoming professional people.

Chapter 2

The Dilemma of the Self

The Dilemma of the Self

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to develop a greater understanding of the professional socialisation process through a theoretical awareness of how it may impact on the selves of those subjected to it. It is my belief that, only through exploring professional socialisation in terms of individuals' developing recognition of their own identity, is it possible to develop some depth of understanding of its intricacies. Such understanding can only be gained by means of mapping a range of theories concerned with structural aspects and processes of self/identity construction. It is to exploring the relevant aspects of self/identity theory to professional socialisation that the major part of this chapter is devoted.

Social constructionism takes as central the notion that identity originates not from inside the person but from the social realm. Hence, I argued from a social constructionist perspective, in the preceding chapter, that the sense of being a professional person, is mediated by others. I also highlighted the capacity of individuals to improvise and adapt as "dynamic figures in the social order" (Calhoun, 2000: 704) by learning to present themselves in certain ways. However, I accept the social constructionist view that social performance, particularly in the context of professional socialisation, is less likely to be an individual achievement of personal agency and more a product of institutional practices and public discourse (Harre, 1992). Nevertheless, my interest lies not in developing a one-sided account of how the professional is 'stamped out' by society (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995: 5) but in gaining first-hand accounts of how it feels to be the person in the professional. Human beings are reflexive

beings and discourses may be socially constructed but are also personalised (O'Connor & Hallam, 2000) Through recourse to self/identity theory it is possible to see how people may come to see themselves as professionals, making sense of their own development in their own terms

However, it is important to take into account the current context for the research Radical changes in society over the past twenty years and speculation about what the future may hold, has according to Gergen (1999 195), led to a sense experienced by many that their lives are in rapid transition Characterised by a loss of predictability, fragmentation of experience, diversity of lifestyles and dissolution of structural categories, such as class and gender, contemporary life challenges 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1991 36) Furthermore, issues of time, space, continuity and identity can no longer be taken for granted Under these circumstances it is not surprising that self/identity issues feature increasingly prominently in popular culture and in research in the social sciences (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997)

According to Woodward (1997 1), identity is a word in common currency "We hear a great deal about identity at global, national, local and personal levels" Woodward argues, there is a 'crisis of identity' brought about by uncertainty surrounding the concept which had previously been considered to be fixed, coherent and stable In fact, Frosh (1991) argues that the fragmented nature of contemporary experience, leads individuals to question whether there is anything 'real' and 'true' lying behind the sense of self which is created within each individual West (1996) suggests that it is paradoxical that in the context of

fracture and uncertainty there are opportunities for men and women to experiment with who and what they are I will show how the women and men in my own study took up the challenge of exploring new selves and that the creation of new professional selves was a collaborative effort Furthermore, I will illustrate how the investment of time and emotion, and the risk to 'old' identities was taken in the hope that "in the distance there is a promise not a certainty, but a chance that something more cohesive and supportive can be created (Frosh, 1991 31)

Because self and identity are widely used concepts and variations in terminology are not uncommon, some clarification of the concepts as I have used them is necessary before I proceed with an involved discussion of three parameters of self/identity theory What unfolds is evidence of an important distinction between these theories which highlights a dilemma for research which focuses on 'self' Many self/identity theories rely on conceptual, philosophical arguments while other claims are supported by empirical evidence While the distinction is not absolute, because in some cases there is some interplay between conceptual and empirical considerations, considerably different arguments arise out of each position The implications of the differing perspectives for self/identity theory will become apparent Self is a dilemma with which the researcher must learn to live

In mapping self/identity theory, first I explore the notion of self as a social phenomenon in some depth engaging with debates that altogether negate the 'I' or the first person meaning of the self in favour of socially constructed

personhood. Second, I go on to consider how our capacity as social beings to be many things to many different people leads to a state of plurality. William James' (1890/1950: 294) classic statement that "a person has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" [sic], suggesting that our sociality leads to the capacity for plural selves, persists in contemporary theory (Rowan, 1990, Gergen, 1991). Yet there exists considerable evidence that rather than feeling fragmented each of us experiences our own coherence through the ontological existence of the self, the 'I' which is strong in all of us (Kondo, 1990). Although postmodern theorists challenge the unifying capacity of the 'I', it is retained in dialogical formulations of self in relation to others. The concept of the dialogical self provides a means of recognising the influence of others on the developing self while acknowledging a reflexive dimension.

The third parameter of self/identity theory of relevance to this thesis is concerned with stability and change. The self is located in a dynamic and changing social milieu in which flexibility and openness to change seem to be essential prerequisites for survival. However, our need as human beings for a balance between change and stability is well recognised (Hormuth, 1990, Lifton, 1993). The self is considered in terms of its openness to change and the concept of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986) introduced as a factor, which may motivate individuals to embark on a course leading to professional status. Identification processes inherent in professional socialisation are recognised both for their contribution to openness to change and to stability.

The final part of the chapter focuses specifically on change and self/identity development as an expected outcome of professional education. Three developmental theories are utilised to support the notion that professional socialisation is mediated by social interaction or relationality. The first theory developed by Robert Kegan (1982) focuses on the 'evolving self' as it moves through a series of developmental stages. Kegan combines cognitive and affective realms of identity development to produce a 'constructive developmental framework' (Kegan, 1982: 15). This framework has been used and developed more latterly by Baxter Magolda (1999) and I will draw on the ideas of both theorists. The third perspective on identity developed by Ruthellen Josselson (1994, 1996) is psychosocial in origin and focuses on the relational aspects of identity development.

My aim throughout this chapter is to build a framework for understanding how the professional socialisation process gives rise to socially constructed selves. As the dimensions of self/identity theory unfold a common theme should begin to emerge which challenges the traditional Western notion of individual selves with a vision of self as relational. However, relationality does not negate some scope for individuals to participate in their own construction rather than being totally 'stamped out' by society (Bakhurst & Sypnowich 1995: 5). In the light of self/identity theory I argue that professional socialisation cannot altogether rule out an element of individual agency. Individuals position themselves in relation to discourses and exercise some degree of choice and autonomy in deciding how they may act out their professional role. However, professional socialisation is largely deterministic in that its aim is to produce predictable change in the

intending professional person. Such change is mediated by social practices therefore relationality is a key tenet of the professional socialisation process

Whatever we are, from the present standpoint, is either directly or indirectly with others
(Gergen, 1999: 137)

Clarification of Concepts

The field of self-identity is a complex area, not least because of the existence of so many interested parties. Although much of the literature is psychological in origin, insights are also drawn from anthropology, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, humanistic psychology, psychoanalysis and feminism. It is not altogether surprising that self and identity have been described as words, which refer to “changing phenomena that defy hard and fast definitions” (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997: 5). Frequently used interchangeably in different contexts and by different disciplines, giving rise to multiple meanings, their contested nature represents one of the hurdles to be overcome by the researcher of self/identity in contemporary society.

Self has been said to refer to “the totality of the individual, somatic and psychic, body and mind”, what s/he actually is (Bosma et al, 1994: 28). Christiansen (1999: 548, *italics in original*) develops this definition further:

When we say *self* we include the direct feeling we have about our thoughts and feelings and sensations. This begins with the awareness of our body and is augmented by our sense of being able to make choices and initiate action.

The self, then, is actual whereas identity refers to the definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self (Christiansen, 1999). In other words, identity is

conceptualised as a mental state, “a constellation by which a person is known (Bosma et al, 1994 27) Woodward (1997) suggests

[1]identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live [It] marks the way in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not (Woodward, 1997 1-2)

Although my interests lie in the development of a professional identity, that is the sense of self brought about by a professionalising process, I will highlight the extent to which professional identity and personal identity are intertwined

Self as Socially Constructed

While psychologists such as William James conceived of identity as a personal phenomenon, a constant internal psychological process, early sociologists conceived of it as socially constructed and variable (Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934, Goffman, 1959/1971) The notion that “identity is not something ‘given’, but is bestowed in acts of social recognition” (Berger, 1966 117) remains central to sociological self-theory and I argue captures the essence of the professional socialisation process as I conceive of it Crossley (1996 67) in his exploration of intersubjectivity maintains that we all undergo a ‘struggle for recognition’, driven by a need to seek and maintain the respect of others, making selfhood inevitably intersubjective Jenkins (1996) carries the original ideas of Mead and Cooley through into contemporary debate

Individual identity - embodied in selfhood - is not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people Individuals are unique and variable, selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed in the processes of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing processes of social interaction within which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives (Jenkins, 1996 20)

Jenkins (1996) argues strongly in favour of socially constructed identity by suggesting that all identities are in some sense social by virtue of being contingent on meaning which is the outcome of shared understanding. Any sense of personal identity is therefore subsumed by social identity and it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two although distinctions do tend to be made for heuristic purposes. Jenkins concedes that if there is a significant difference between the two, it is that personal identity emphasises difference, while social identity focuses on similarities. At the inception of this study this distinction seemed to me to be an important one to make, especially in the context of the development of professional identity. I saw the professional socialisation process as conferring a very specific social identity, different to the personal, not realising how intimately the two were intertwined.

If a distinction is to be found it is within psychological and social psychological literature, predictably so, if one agrees with Jenkin's suggestion that such a distinction can only be made where there exists a belief in individuality, a belief traditionally well embedded in psychological theory. So, for instance, Breakwell (1992) establishes the distinction clearly, defining personal identity as part of the self-concept, unique to the individual and a product of personal agency and social identity as derived from group and category membership. According to Hewitt (1994) personal identity involves separateness and difference emphasising a sense of autonomy rather than communal involvement. By contrast, he refers to social identity as a sense of self, built up through social life and identification with others, with whom one has an affinity and with whom one feels whole.

Social identity, Hewitt maintains, is therefore anchored in a sense of belonging and similarity to others, an important point upon which I will draw in chapter 5

The extent of interaction between what have been distinguished as personal and social selves is explored by Deaux (1992) who, having employed an hierarchical model in her own empirical research, concludes that the meaning of identity will vary between individuals and will have both personal and social facets. Any distinction between the two she suggests is temporal and dependent upon the level of perceived separation of self and others in any given situation. Perhaps rather predictably Deaux's findings confirm the salience of the 'ontological existence of the first person' (Wong, 1999: 73) within the social milieu.

To conceive of the self as anything other than an autonomous controlling entity is a challenging notion. Sampson (1993) uses the 'container' metaphor to explain the popular belief that individuals begin and end at the limits of their body, bodies are containers with an inside and an outside, the essence of the person being located inside the container, everything outside is other. That the person within the container maintains control over the individual is a popular assumption. Gergen (1999: 117) acknowledges

[1]t is comfortable to believe in the centrality of private experience and ourselves as conscious decision makers, masters of our own action. However, such comfortable assumptions have been placed in question.

Other social constructionists, critical theorists and feminists have challenged this traditional conception of identity and highlight opportunities to re-conceptualise it in terms of plurality, difference and connection which have hitherto been

repressed (Weir, 1996) For instance, Rose (1996 171) problematises the container metaphor at a fundamental level by posing the question, “Why should our bodies end at our skin, or include at best others encapsulated by the skin?” The challenge to the bounded self is certainly supported by relational theorists Sampson (1993) suggests that in situations where the boundary between inside and outside becomes permeable, for example between mother and child, individuality is threatened However, relational theorists would argue to the contrary that women’s sense of identity is constructed through connection, through a merging of self and other (Gilligan, 1982/1993, Miller, 1986, Chodorow, 1989, Gilligan, Rogers & Brown, 1990, Josselson, 1996)

It seems that self-focused autonomy and other-focused connection exist as dichotomous positions However, feminists in particular have sought to resolve the dichotomy For example, Lykes (1985) reconstructs conceptions of self, from individualistic or collective, into a notion of ‘social individuality’ She shows how research with women highlights how collective experience provides an alternative foundation for a sense of self, which springs from but is not subsumed by the collective Nevertheless, Josselson (1994) suggests

Although identity is in part distinct differentiated selfhood it is also an integration of relational contexts that profoundly shape, bound and limit but also create opportunities for the emergent identity (Josselson, 1994 89)

Drawing on the work of George Herbert Mead, Jenkins (1996) puts forward a model of social identity which he terms the ‘internal-external dialectic of identification’ and which he conceives of as

[a]n ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others
(Jenkins, 1996: 20)

This, he argues, is the process through which all identities are constituted, maintaining that what people think about us is as important as what we think about ourselves. The question is the extent to which internal definition is mediated by the influence of others. In other words, what is the relationship between internal and external definition?

Deleterious individualism has been attributed to a failure to recognise our status as social beings (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995: 1). However, there is evidence of a reorientation of theoretical work away from individuated models of selfhood (Gergen, 1991, 1999, Giddens, 1991, Crossley, 1996) towards more connected, intersubjective dialogic-based theories already touched upon. In fact, there seems to be an increasing groundswell of opinion that the personal self is embedded in multiple social contexts and as such is fundamentally socially constructed.

According to Bakhurst & Sypnowich (1995), the strength of argument in support of socially constructed selves varies from the belief that our identities are shaped and moulded by social and cultural influences, to the more extreme view that our capacities to think and act are themselves socially constructed. The former view, while recognising the impact of others on the construction of the self, acknowledges self-involvement or personal agency (Markova, 1987). The latter more extreme social constructionist view maintains that the self emerges from the dialectic between the individual and society. It is through interaction with

others that we develop a sense of who we are. Our roles, beliefs and attitudes represent the internalised influence of others, from whom we learn how to live in society. Adopting this stance, Gergen (1999: 122) adds

What we take to be knowledge of the world grows from relationship, and is embedded not within individual minds but within interpretive or communal traditions. In effect, there is a way in which constructionalist dialogues celebrate relationship as opposed to the individual, connection over isolation, and communion over antagonism.

Social saturation, according to Gergen (1991) means that the self will become increasingly open to social construction especially since advancing technology increases the opportunities for social interaction. Similarly, Coole (1995) argues that the intermediate position of reciprocity between self and others has been overtaken because the notion of an essential core, or a personal self has been eliminated, rather self is socially created through systems of power and through discourse. Created through dramaturgy, selves “are but special effects” (Coole, 1995: 127). If this is the case, internal definition will be increasingly mediated by others.

However, extreme social constructionism is criticised for effectively negating the first person from the analysis of personhood (Wong, 1999). As I have argued in the previous chapter, individuals are capable of making choices and acting tactically to influence their lives. Discourses, as Coole suggests, may be socially constructed but are also personalised (O'Connor & Hallam, 2000). While acknowledging the power of others to construct the individual, especially in the context of professional socialisation, it is difficult to believe that practices and discourses will be taken up equally and without question in each individual case.

The following section addresses how as each of us are moulded in many different ways we retain a strong sense of self

Plurality and Unity

The previous discussion reveals the complexity of interaction between the person and their social context. Social constructionists believe that because identities are social they are also multiple, so for instance Gergen (1991) refers to the 'saturated' or 'populated' self. However, it is difficult to ignore the perception that rather than being fragmented we each experience ourselves as more or less unified (Kondo, 1990, Harre, 1998). The aim of the following section is to clarify the debate around the classic binary between plurality and unity and to resolve the dichotomy with reference to arguments that maintain the coexistence of unity and multiplicity. This position supports the notion that the professional person is created dialogically, reinforcing the developing theme of social interaction as a key to self/identity development.

Plural Selves

Anderson (1990) argues that change is more easily accomplished where plurality exists. Therefore, if fragmentation, multiple choice and rapid change now characterise everything we do from the way we work, the ways in which we communicate with each other, to who we want to be, plural selves would seem to be a necessity in contemporary society. In fact, plurality has only relatively recently been considered to be part of normal adjustment, having been previously pathologised on the assumption that personhood is founded on unity, continuity and sameness. Larsen's (1990: 176) notion of an 'inner cast of characters'

constantly in interplay paints a fine line between Multiple Personality Disorder and plurality

Gergen's (1991) notion of the 'saturated self, Bauman's (1996) metaphor of the self as a kaleidoscope and Lifton's (1993) concept of the plural and ever-changing 'protean' self all seem to capture the spirit of our times, the need for change, the need for plurality in a complex world. Gergen (1991) also uses the analogy of indeterminate 'text' to describe the self as it is pieced together like a collage created through social discourse. Rather than being fixed or constant the self seems to be conceptualised as always under construction "revamped and relaunched at regular intervals" (Craib, 1998: 3)

Plural selves may vary on a number of dimensions, for instance McAdams (1997) describes how they are evident in both spatial and temporal terms

One juggles multiple roles, tries on different hats, different lives, forging selves whose unity is at best tentative and provisional, selves waiting to be dissolved into new combinations or even discarded for brand new editions when life changes and new challenges arise (McAdams, 1997: 48)

McAdams' image of plurality certainly seems to reflect the intricacies of the everyday life of the student, the juggling of roles and the tensions and struggles between different selves, evident in this study and in other research (Edwards, 1993b). The enactment of a diversity of roles is one of the most common ways of interpreting plural selves and it has been argued that role identity is such an important aspect of self that the two are synonymous (Stryker, 1980). Moreover, role-playing and plural selves have been deemed to be coterminous on the basis that roles, eventually over time, become internalised to form alternative forms of

self, sub-selves or subpersonalities (Rappoport et al, 1999) Certainly students spoke with frequency about their roles However, selves, rather than being synonymous with roles seemed to transcend them Whereas people and their roles could be separable (Davies & Harre, 1990), selves, as a series of positions taken up (Woodward, 1997), constitute the person

The idea of plural selves is not novel to contemporary thinking (Rose, 1996), although pluralism has been conceptualised in different ways (Rappoport et al, 1999) Serial pluralism, which describes how individuals move through a number of transitional phases throughout their lives, has been a widely acknowledged phenomenon for many years Simultaneous pluralism or the possession of “a dynamic portfolio of alternative self-concepts” has been widely acknowledged more recently (Rappoport et al, 1999 99)

However, generally plurality has been deemed to exist in conjunction with a unifying core This perceived need for an organising centre can be traced from the late nineteenth century to contemporary times (James, 1890/1950, Goffman, 1959/1971, Gergen, 1991) The unifying force has been conceptualised as a stream of consciousness (James, 1890/1950 294) providing continuity over time and as implicit in individual agency and choice in identity creation (Goffman, 1959/1971, Gergen, 1991) To think of plural selves as not being unified in some way by an organising centre, giving a sense of a unified being (Assagioli, 1965, Rossan, 1987), seems to be an anathema Nevertheless, poststructural theorists adopt a radical stance by arguing that the notion of a core is a myth, constructed through narrative For instance, Weir (1996) maintains we are each the product of

cultural discourses originating not from within the person but from the social realm, therefore even our narratives are not our own. Consequently the individual is “not fixed but reconstituted in language on each and every occasion we speak” (Thomas & Walsh, 1998: 367). This position resonates strongly with a social constructionist position.

The Unitary Self

Why then is the notion of some unifying, organising force within us so appealing? Weir (1996) maintains that its appeal rests on the comfort it provides. Gergen’s (1999) explanation is historical. He suggests that it is because Enlightenment conceptions of the self are still in evidence in contemporary society in that “[w]e prize our capacities for conscious thought, self-determination, the freedom to determine our own futures” (Gergen, 1999: 7). Such a belief system, which is dominated by rationality, objectivity, normative control and the scientific search for truth, and generated largely in the Western world and male-dominated, still represents a powerful discourse. The anthropologist, Geertz (1973) formulated the following frequently quoted definition of the individual as

A bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement and action, organised into a distinctive whole
(Geertz, 1973: 229)

As I will illustrate, this definition held considerable meaning for some of the students in this study, many of whom had grown up surrounded by the discourse of free will and individualism.

Freud (1923/1991) has perhaps been the greatest and most influential advocate of the unified self, despite dividing it into id, ego and super-ego, which may be considered pluralistic (Rapport et al, 1999) Nevertheless, Freud's many followers have continued to uphold the notion of unity That such a sense is gained by virtue of our embodiment as biological organisms (Breakwell, 1986) is a popular proposition As Giddens (1991: 59) points out, "most people are absorbed in their bodies, and feel themselves to be a unified body and self" This argument is also supported by Jenkins (1996: 45)

Most of the time most people don't seem to experience themselves as an assembly of different bits and particularly not as a plurality of different entities Perhaps the most important source of this consistency is the embodiment of selfhood Although over time and across situations we recognise conflicts and different possibilities within ourselves, these don't constitute a committee or a cast of characters Dividing the self up into bits thus risks losing sight of the fact that most humans most of the time live their lives as more or less unitary selves

When juxtaposed with the analyses of feminists who argue that women frequently experience themselves as an assembly of parts, for example, having public and private selves (Edwards, 1993b), Jenkins' perspective on the unitary self could be criticised as signifying a typically male notion of embodiment

McAdams (1997) explores two processes, which he argues contribute to the idea of a unified self The first process emphasises the importance of the 'I' in promoting continuity and unity (See also, Brown, 1998, Craib, 1998) McAdams refers to the process of 'selfing' or the agency of the 'I', which unifies the self by synthesising experiences so that they are owned by the 'me' (McAdams, 1995) The second process, I suggest, gives expression to the first It is the tendency to construct a narrative of self, creating a sense of 'me' McAdams argues that

despite change occurring over time, coherence and unity of the self are maintained through a narrative frame, comprising stories, which build a self-history To McAdams (1997: 63) “identity is the story that the modern ‘I’ constructs and tells about the me”

The construction of narrative as a unifying feature of people’s lives has been well supported (Brookes, 1984, Polkinghorne, 1988, Bruner, 1990, Coyle, 1992, Freeman, 1998) In fact, Ricoeur (1992) suggests that the elusive character of real life necessitates a mechanism such as the use of narrative for organising life retrospectively However, he highlights that, compelling though the idea may be, narrative unity should be recognised as “an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience” (Ricoeur, 1992: 162) It is the tendency to construct a narrative of the self that I will highlight as having been influential in shaping my analysis of the stories around which this thesis revolves

Self-pluralism

Despite the assertion that the condition of postmodernity generates a context where “the notion of a unified self begins to stand out like a relic from a bygone era” (Rowan & Cooper, 1999: 1), much contemporary theorising seems reluctant to totally discard the notion of unity Rose (1996) maintains that it is intellectually feasible to suggest that the subject is dead, fragmented and lost to plurality However, our own reflexivity (McAdams, 1995, Rowan & Cooper, 1999) may be considered to be a convincing factor favouring a less extreme alternative What has emerged as a result is a middle way, a self-pluralistic approach which satisfies a concern for the human being and appeals to

subjectivity, while simultaneously recognising fragmentation and discontinuity

Rowan and Cooper (1999 2-3) suggest

A person may not always be one person, nor the same person from moment to moment, the individual is always seen as encountering their world in the mode of personhood, and these personhoods together are seen as forming a meaningful whole

What the self-pluralistic approach offers, in the context of this thesis, is a means of seeing the professional self as one self, which contributes to the whole person

Rowan (1990 8) refers to different positions or selves as subpersonalities, which are described as “semi-permanent and semi-autonomous region[s] of the personality capable of acting as a person” although subpersonalities are also conceptualised more latterly as subelves, voices, and potentials (Rowan & Cooper, 1999) The experience of being one self is deemed vital for development in that it enables a singleness of vision necessary as a foundation for further development However, Rowan (1990 221-222) maintains that to experience unity is to reach a watershed or turning point, it is “not a place to stay for ever” Multiplicity is deemed to be equally as vital for development

Cooper (1999 67) develops the notion of “one-with-the-potential-to-be-many a unified Being-towards-the-world which has the possibility of being-towards-its-world from a variety of self positions” Davies and Harre (1990 46) maintain that the positions taken up by the individual are “constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” However, Cooper (1999) argues that it is the relationship between the many positions, in other words, ‘the unified Being’, and not the positions themselves, which constitute the lived experience

The self-pluralistic approach can also be illustrated through the notion of the dialogical self which originates in Bakhtin's (1981) polyphonic novel in which voices of different characters occupy different spatial positions, and in dialogue, may agree or disagree. Developing Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical self, Hermans et al (1992) conceptualise the self in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of 'I' positions.

The *I* has the possibility to move, as in space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The *I* has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story. Once a character is set in motion in a story, the character takes on a life of its own and thus assumes a certain narrative necessity. Each character has a story to tell about experiences from its own stance.
(Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992: 28-29, italics in original)

Hermans (1997: 393) suggests that multivoicedness or the capacity for dialogue with ourselves, with others, with our gods, not only blurs the boundaries between self and other, but confers 'unity-in-multiplicity' through the integrative dynamic of dialogue and 'multiplicity-in-unity' reflected in the autonomous I positions.

The self-pluralistic perspective resolves the classic dichotomy between unity and multiplicity albeit that the retention of a belief in a unifying core has been criticised from a feminist perspective (Coole, 1995). However, it has been argued that acceptance of a dialogical formulation of the self, where multiplicity becomes the norm, de-emphasises the core (Sampson, 1993). As such unity and continuity may then be considered to be a social accomplishment rather than a key organising feature of identity. Nevertheless, Harre (1998) maintains

Our experience of the world and of ourselves as part of that world has a 'point of origin', a singularity which is differentiated from every other. Our personal attributes, including our memories, taken together make up a unique cluster of stories different from the clusters of anyone else. Finally, there is unity: the lives, experiences, thoughts and memories of most people somehow hold together as just one person. The unities of real lives are complex and ever-changing structures, but when compromised the very existence of a human being as a person is under threat (Harre, 1998: 19)

The debates surrounding unified, plural and self-pluralistic perspectives of self are complex and many. I have aimed only to outline the main positions that I feel are of relevance to this thesis. Echoing the words of Harre (1998), I will show how the students involved in my study, despite acknowledging their own multiplicity, were keen to preserve their sense of unity. The self-pluralistic approach to identity development seems to provide a theoretical explanation for the reflexive ways in which students experienced their own identity development. In addition, it helps to develop an understanding of how selves may be constructed and reconstructed dialogically, through interaction. In the following section I consider the process of construction and reconstruction and question openness to change even in the context of professional education where certain changes are inevitable.

Stability and Change

Since change, which is inherent in becoming a professional person, is implicit in professional socialisation it is a recurrent theme within this thesis. Yet, notions of change seem to go hand in hand with stability. There exists a paradox, which informs a common sense definition of identity, that is, "something cannot change if it does not, in a certain respect, remain the same" (Bosma et al, 1994: 8). It is

to the tensions between personal change inherent in the professional socialisation process and the perceived need by students to remain unchanged in certain respects that I now turn

According to Breakwell (1986) identity confers a sense of unique individuality or distinctiveness, which begins to develop in early childhood and continues throughout life. Changes are inevitable yet existentially at least, aspects of our unique 'being' remain the same and consequently we experience our own continuity across time (Breakwell, 1986). Acceleration in the rate of cultural change has begun to demand a new orientation towards self with an emphasis on change as opposed to stability. As a consequence, Frosh (1991: 6) suggests that "the only stable state of being is instability - openness to change, revolutionary transformation, catastrophic discontinuity. The real turmoil in the outside world is mirrored internally". Frosh (1991) maintains that such a state can be both exciting and threatening. People respond either by learning to live with uncertainty, remaining open to new experience or by closing down in order to create a sense of security, becoming defensive against change. However, I argue that the response to change is less of an either/or choice than Frosh suggests on the premise that most people are driven both by a desire to change and held back by the fear of it (Osborne, 1996).

Stability and change during the transition from adolescence to adulthood has been well researched (Erikson, 1968, Gecas & Mortimer, 1987, Marcia, 1994) whereas stability and change in adulthood has inspired less interest, even though change and transition have been found to be recurrent features

of life history (Fisher, 1990) One study conducted with a large sample of adults (Handel, 1987) found evidence of a greater degree of stability than had been expected However, 'progressive' self-narratives, reflecting a sense of improvement and accruing personal gains, were evident Nevertheless, Handel concluded that there was no empirical evidence of radical change in adult identity although this was not to suggest change did not occur

In the context of adult education, change is said to be "rarely revolutionary in character, it is most often evolutionary and gradual" (Jarvis, 1992: 209) The literature on adults returning to education (for example, Caracelli, 1988, Pascall & Cox, 1993, Merrill, 1999) despite acknowledging a marked capacity for change also highlights to varying degrees the need for stability For instance, the women in the study conducted by Pascall and Cox (1993) express an ambivalence to change, accepting that it is inevitability yet at the same time wanting to avoid it

Latterly, Lifton (1993) has suggested that the sequential, multiple and fluid 'protean self' which exhibits a capacity for change, is both fluid and grounded "Proteanism, is a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other" (Lifton, 1993: 9) The suggestion that, empirically, stability is as fundamental to self as change, suggests that the postmodern conception of self, lacking coherence and continuity, may be too extreme when considered in the light of first person experience which is powerful in promoting a sense of personal coherence For

instance, Elster (1986) suggests that profound changes, such as those that occur in the case of religious conversion, do not undermine an underpinning sense of continuity, which is maintained through memories of the past and anticipation of the future

Although such coherence evident in self-narrative has been condemned as partially fictional (Ricoeur, 1992) its existence is difficult to challenge empirically. Despite acknowledging considerable change in themselves I will highlight how the students involved in the study on which this thesis is based showed a tendency to create their own sense of stability in a variety of ways. While some made conscious efforts to keep the course in perspective, to resist change at a personal fundamental level, others moderated perceived change through the notion that rather than representing a new dimension of self change was simply a development of a pre-existing trait.

Hormuth (1990), in conceiving of the self as part of an ecological system, provides a means of understanding the need for stability and change. As in all ecological systems equilibrium is vital to maintaining the self yet changes occur which are either externally or self-imposed. The extent of likely externally imposed change within the professional socialisation process has already been discussed. Self-imposed change, such as opting to become a student in higher education, occurs either because the individual actively seeks a change of direction, or attempts to enhance an existing self by making use of opportunities in new social and physical environments. Hormuth suggests that exposure to new environments or new role models are likely to be experienced as destabilizing,

but will also provide opportunities for experimentation with new ideas, new selves. By stressing the importance of environments, which he believes can be symbolic of certain aspects of our identities, Hormuth will help to illustrate how the transition from university into the practicum proved to be significant in both confirming and disconfirming professional identities. Perhaps most significantly in the context of this thesis, Hormuth (1990) emphasizes the importance of interaction with other people in maintaining and changing identity, although he also suggests that social commitments serve to stabilise the ecology of the self. In other words, both stability and change are dependent on our relationality.

In Pursuit of Change

The students within this study had exposed themselves to change of their own volition and were aware that they would be moulded to a certain extent throughout the professional socialisation process. Although their motives varied, it seems that they were looking to the future and making an effort to fulfil some sort of potential, they readily embraced change. A feasible explanation for the motivating force can be found in the concept of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 954), "[p]ossible selves are the ideal selves which we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become and the selves we are afraid of becoming." Some of the students joined the course straight from school, while others had waited for their children to grow up before seeking to re-train in order to re-enter the labour market. Some students had either been employed or had experienced motherhood and were unfulfilled in these roles. For all of these students, seeing the possibility of a future in OT was a way of envisaging a new self or trying on a different hat (McAdams, 1997).

Envisioning the possibility of a goal such as becoming an OT helps to channel energy into achieving success. However, adopting a new identity involves not only visualising the self taking up that identity but also ‘positioning’ the self in relation to the discourses around that identity. Such positioning involves identification, which according to Woodward (1997), is an ongoing process. Exposure to new experiences throughout life means that individuals go on identifying with what they want to be and in this way remain open to change.

However, identification is also said to be a means of seeking “some unified sense of ourselves through symbolic systems and identify[ing] with the ways in which we are seen by others” (Woodward, 1997: 45). Recognition of the self as belonging, for instance, to a professional group and “seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned” (Davies & Harre, 1990: 47) could be deemed to be stabilising. In addition, the involvement of others suggests that identification militates against a differentiated sense of self and in terms of the creation of a professional identity I suggest it may account for a sense of ‘membership’ (Crossley, 1996: 65).

Identification processes precede and constitute identity (Pitt, 1997). However, Woodward (1997) maintains that because we continue to identify with what we want to be, outside of the self, the self is permanently divided. The notion that identity is initially adopted from outside the self is an important point that I will discuss in chapter 7. However, in the context of stability and change it seems appropriate to complete this section by stressing that the postmodern self is a self

of 'becoming' rather than 'being' (Kennedy, 1992) The self is a process intimately involved in fleeting contacts with others with whom we identify so that it becomes a pastiche, a composition of identifications and fragments of others (Gergen, 1991) Furthermore, Bauman (1996) maintains that the process of becoming is not aimed at realising oneself therefore it does not bind us to the notion of development He proposes

In the same way as the pilgrim was the most fitting metaphor for the modern life strategy preoccupied with the daunting task of identity-building, the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player offer jointly the metaphor for the post-modern strategy moved by the horror of being bound and fixed
(Bauman, 1996 26)

In agreement with Bauman's metaphors I alluded in the previous chapter to the possibility of likening the students involved in this study to players in the game of professional socialisation However, Bauman's notion that the process of becoming is about avoiding becoming bound or committed, I argue, does not on the whole reflect the attitudes of the students towards the course and the OT profession They had all made commitments and they were all identity building

Theories of Development Informing Professional Socialisation

Change we are told is the essence of development (Bosma et al, 1994) and development within Western societies is equated with growth and progress Such developmentalism has been condemned as hegemonic (Morss, 1996), as having implications for people's lives and hopes because it measures people against each other as if we all follow the same path Developmental goals are, nevertheless, institutionalised into systems of education In the context of professional socialisation I have already acknowledged a considerable prescriptive element,

which very much results in students following a similar path towards becoming a professional person. This final part of the chapter focuses specifically on the change process and on the dynamic of self/identity development as an expected outcome of professional education.

Research designed to explore what happens to students during their time at college or university, although not specifically focusing on students on professional courses, has tended to adopt either an impact or a developmental approach (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The impact approach most commonly employing quantitative methods has focused on cognitive and affective outcomes that students associate with both the academic aspect of student life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and with social out-of-class experiences (Kuh, 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) divide identified outcomes into nine domains: knowledge and subject matter competence, cognitive skills and intellectual growth, psychosocial changes, attitudes and values, moral development, educational attainment, career choice and development, economic benefits, and quality of life after college. That the combined effect of change within a number of these domains impacts on the student's sense of identity is claimed to be one of the most important outcomes of college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

My own study has sought to explore the meanings which individuals make of their own experiences as they journey through the three years of a course leading to professional status and what this means to them in terms of identity development. An outcomes approach seemed to me to be too prescribed and overly constraining for this purpose. One may argue that professional education

is necessarily prescribed, that outcomes are appropriate to measuring competence, particularly where the licence to practice hinges on it. However, my belief was that the complexity of professional development needed to be deconstructed through a developmental approach combining cognitive and psychosocial theories.

Rationale for Choice of Conceptual Framework for Development

Three theories have been selected for their capacity to inform this thesis in terms of the complexity of cognitive and psychosocial development occurring within the context of professional socialisation. Prior to discussing each perspective in greater depth I will explain the basis on which the theories were chosen. On the whole, developmental theories have been heavily influenced by psychological theory. Hence emphasis is placed on *intra-personal* dynamics at the expense of external influences, such as the impact of other people on developing selves. Such developmental theories, although helpful in promoting an understanding of certain aspects of development, such as the self-concept, do not adequately underpin the notion of the self as socially constructed.

I have chosen the theories of Robert Kegan, Marcia Baxter Magolda and Ruthellen Josselson to provide a framework for analysis specifically because they all highlight the *inter-personal* nature of identity development. All three theories acknowledge the socially contingent nature of development and as such illustrate how we may conceive of professional socialisation as mediated by others. By acknowledging *inter-personal* dynamics, the three theories highlight the tensions between personal and social forces at work in the process of becoming

professional. In other words, the theories help to explain the complex interplay between the individual and wider socialising influences outside of the individual psyche. The overall effect is to characterise development as a recurrent, intricate and by no means purely linear, straightforward or predictable progression that so many developmental theories portray. Kegan's developmental theory is based on conceptual arguments originating in philosophy (Kegan, 1994). By contrast Josselson and Baxter Magolda rely heavily on empirical research. By drawing on the work of all three theorists the thesis benefits from being informed by both conceptual and empirical work. I contend that, supporting propositions made earlier in the thesis, the theories augment the central argument that the professional self is socially constructed.

Kegan's 'helix of evolutionary truces'

Kegan's (1982: 109) model of identity development is based on a helix of 'evolutionary truces' (See Figure 1). Kegan sees each developmental stage as a truce or a temporary solution to the lifelong tension between the yearning for inclusion or the need to belong and a yearning to be distinct, independent. He maintains

The model recognises the dignity of each yearning and in this respect offers a corrective to all present developmental frameworks which unequivocally define growth in terms of differentiation, separation, autonomy, and lose sight of the fact that adaptation is equally about integration, attachment, inclusion
(Kegan, 1982: 108)

According to Kegan development involves becoming temporarily embedded in one truce before being impelled to break away from it to move to the other polarity, resulting in a continual moving back and forth between resolving

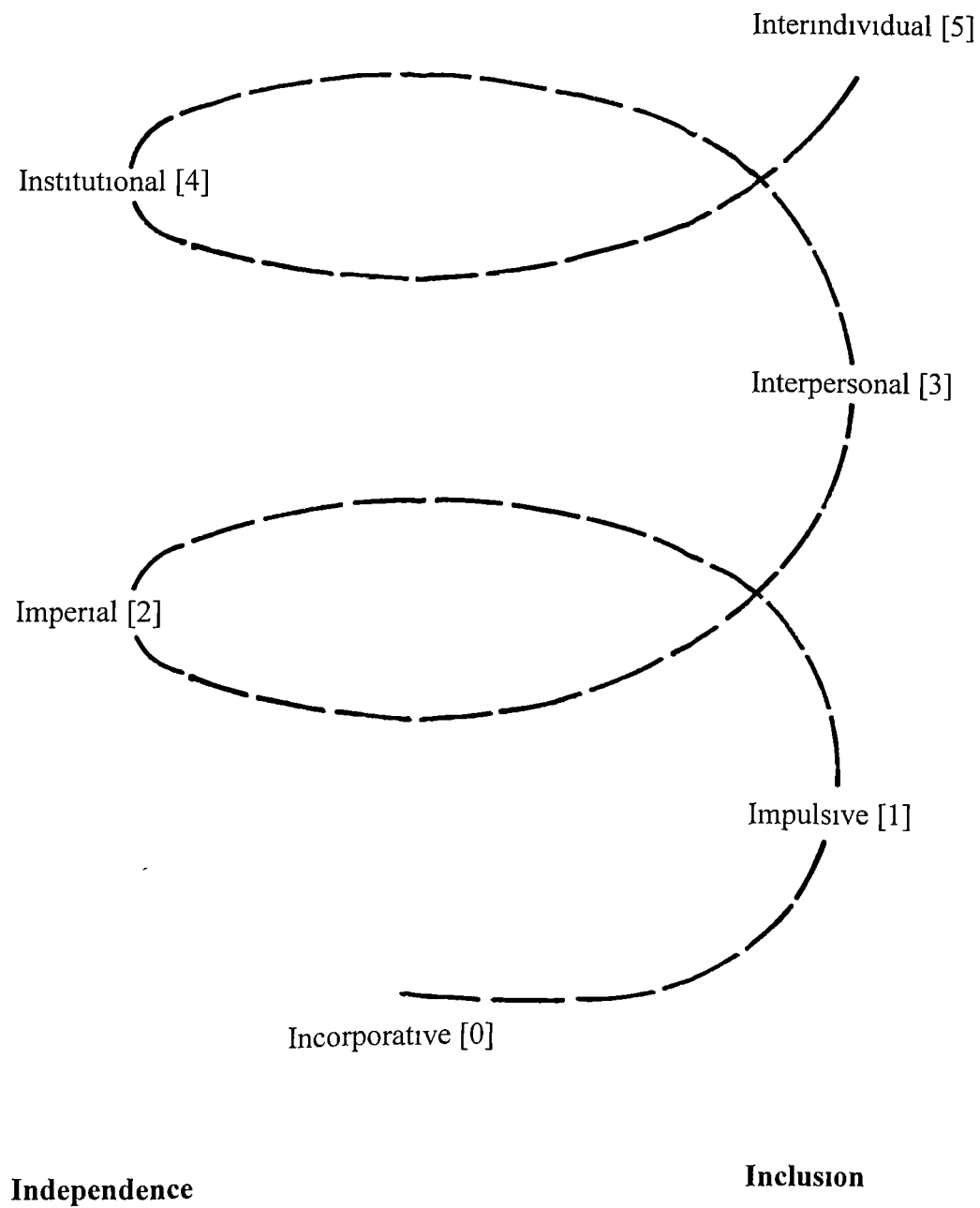


Figure 1 - Kegan's Helix of Evolutionary Truces

tensions in favour of independence and inclusion. Kegan emphasises how the movement back and forth within the helix typifies a lifelong journey and how the balances are in fact slight imbalances, each temporary, each “vulnerable to being tipped over” (Kegan, 1982: 108). There are certain parallels here with the balance of stability and change in Hormuth’s (1990) concept of the ecology of the self, always vulnerable to change yet needing to restabilise even if temporarily under new ecological conditions. The dynamic for change is, Kegan argues, the subject/object relationship. ‘Object’ he defines as those elements of our knowing that we can reflect on, internalise, observe, stand apart from and ‘subject’ refers to those aspects of knowing in which we are embedded or with which we are fused. Development is such that as we are exposed to new experiences, what is subject at one stage becomes object in the next.

The move from stage one, the ‘impulsive balance’ to ‘imperial balance’, occurs during childhood and, in order to reach the third stage of ‘interpersonal balance’, there is a need for a shift away from self-centredness. The stage and subsequent transition, which is of particular interest in the context of this thesis, is that of ‘interpersonal balance’ and the move to ‘institutional balance’. In the former, relationships with others are subject, identity is constituted by our relationships, which bring the self into being. Kegan argues that at this stage the self is shared, embodying a plurality of voices and consumed by the external influences of others around. Gaining the approval of others is a prime concern. This position should begin to sound familiar as it resonates closely with social constructionist thought and the notion of dialogical selves. As I will illustrate in chapter 7 it also

reflects how students perceived themselves particularly in the context of the practicum

However, in the shift to ‘institutional balance’, Kegan suggests that relationships become object as we become able to stand apart from them and reflect upon them. The shift from “I am my relationships” to “I have relationships” is significant in that it signals a sense of achievement of an identity and an authority that shows a capacity for self definition. Approval of others and the threat of rejection become less of a concern to the individual, signalling a major developmental step. However, as Kegan (1982: 101) maintains, “others are not lost by an emergence from embeddedness in the interpersonal balance. (On the contrary in a sense they are found)” What has changed is that the meaning-making system becomes internal and thus mediates the influence of others. Only at the most advanced stage of, ‘interindividual balance’, does the self become an object for reflection, signalling the capacity for reflexivity.

Baxter Magolda: Becoming one’s own person

Baxter Magolda (1999), known more widely for her work on epistemological development, has recently used Kegan’s theory of development in interpreting issues of self definition and relationships with others in the post-college phase of a longitudinal study (Baxter Magolda, 1992). She found that participants, who were by then employed, were in a process of liberating themselves from embeddedness in external influences to constructing who they were for themselves. Participants whose identities were externally defined were largely reactive to their environments and to the people in them usually in full awareness

of their over-reliance on external voices. However, the growing strength of an internal voice created tensions between for instance, “being successful employees and finding fulfilling work” and “being good partners and maintaining their own interests” (Baxter Magolda, 1999: 637). As I will show in chapter 7 similar tensions between being ‘good students’ and doing a good job and doing what they felt was right for them, were experienced by several of the OT students.

The process of moving out of external definition and into internal definition was, for the students in Baxter Magolda’s study, gradual and associated with post-college experience. However, in the context of this study I argue that some students already had or else had begun to develop an internal sense of themselves as OT’s towards the end of their course. The maturity of some of the OT students may have been an influential factor in moving towards an internal definition of self, although, even the youngest student involved in this study had begun to consider her own goals, commitments and responsibilities within her future life as an OT. Baxter Magolda (1999) suggests that for her participants internal voices were developed when they were offered opportunities for self-reflection. Similarly, I suggest that it is possible that the specific socialisation through which the OT students were prepared for their work as OT’s facilitated the development of an internal identity through its emphasis on reflection.

Social constructionists would undoubtedly maintain that to arrive at the stage of internal definition is simply to have been moulded by dominant discourses. This is a difficult suggestion to challenge and indeed I will illustrate the dynamics of the moulding process by highlighting the power of other people and how their

feedback becomes interiorised Nevertheless, I will also show that students were not always totally moulded

Josselson's Relational Contexts of Identity Development

Kegan and Baxter Magolda's work, when considered in the context of professional socialisation, highlights the extent to which other people are likely to influence developing professional selves Ruthellen Josselson's work on relational contexts of identity development can develop our understanding still further by considering more closely the dynamics of social interaction Unlike many models of identity development, which tend to focus on the importance of separation/individuation (Erikson, 1968, Kohlberg, 1969, Levinson, 1986), Josselson's theory is based on the notion of intersubjectivity She highlights how research has shown that "people create their lives within a web of connection to others" yet notes that "relationship as a goal, interconnection as an aim - these had no place in our theories" (Josselson, 1996 1) Establishing her position, she stresses

[a] theory of identity must include a vision of the individual developing more differentiated forms of connection to others while also cherishing movement towards self-realization Individuation is toward greater belonging and sharing
(Josselson, 1994 89)

Josselson (1994 101) maintains that identity is an integration of ways of 'being with' others with ways of 'being with' oneself and that people anchor themselves in 'being with' through a number of dimensions of relatedness She identifies eight anchor points or dimensions through which people define themselves in connection The first four are primary, basic and often unconscious They are holding, attachment, passionate experience and validation The next four appear

later developmentally, demand cognition and are, she argues, more conscious
They are identification, mutuality, embeddedness and tending (care)

Josselson suggests that the dimensions may unfold simultaneously or independently and that they may incorporate each other and shade into one another but she maintains that they cannot be reduced one to another. Each has a separate fundamental phenomenology. Aspects of Josselson's theory will be explored in greater depth and challenged particularly in chapter 5. In the meantime I will set down a brief outline of the areas to be covered. One dimension, that of passionate experience, will not be covered as it is concerned with the libidinal aspects of relatedness, which were not felt to be of relevance in the context of this study.

I begin with the concept of 'identification', which has been extensively explored by Albert Bandura (1969: 214) and defined as "a process in which a person patterns his [sic] thoughts, feelings, or actions after another person who serves as a model". Identification seems particularly pertinent to the process of becoming a professional person as has already been highlighted (Woodward, 1997). Josselson (1996) stresses the influence of others who we admire and idealise and from whom we gain inspiration. Other people, she suggests, represent what may be possible, in other words, they embody possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and therefore promote attempts at imitation or working towards possessing similar qualities. The importance of identification and counter-identification with discourses and with people, who became role models and anti-models, on a

developing sense of professional identity in the students involved in my own study will become apparent as the thesis unfolds

Although Josselson (1994) suggests that ‘tending’ or ‘caring’ is a dimension seldom mentioned in relation to identity, as conceived in terms of individuality and autonomy, it seems likely to be a key concept in the context of socialisation into a caring profession. Josselson’s work on this relational dimension serves as a backdrop for exploring notions of care in the specific context of a caring profession, which has given rise to a considerable volume of research. Josselson (1996: 196) maintains that “[t]he human need to tend, to offer care, reflects our need to feel needed by others”. It may be argued that to choose to care in a professional capacity requires a particular type of person. Certainly, I will illustrate how caring “requires the motivation and ability to be aware of and respond to another’s state of need” which becomes increasingly mediated by a professional front (Josselson, 1996: 207). In addition, I will illustrate Josselson’s assertion that care involves the effort to balance the interests of others with the need to care for self. It is through the story of the struggle of one male student to achieve such a balance that I will highlight problems with gender stereotypical notions of caring.

Josselson (1994: 101) proposes that “[t]he need for holding, attachment and embeddedness provides the framework for identity, the outline and the base within which people think about, feel about, and realize themselves”. I have sought to deconstruct these three concepts and to understand how they may provide a framework for identity in the context of this study. My analyses suggest

that they are vital to the creation of some sense of stability amidst change and as such probably do provide a base from which the world can be explored. In the context of stability, the concept of 'mutuality' is considered specifically in relation to peers and as emerging from embeddedness in peer culture.

Finally, Josselson (1994: 94) argues, "identity must be affirmed." In other words, we all need confirmation from others in developing a sense of self. She uses the concept of eye-to-eye validation to explore how we discover our meaning to others and what we come to believe about ourselves. She suggests "development of the self is framed and shaped in the mirrors that others provide (Josselson, 1996: 103). The notion of people as mirrors, influential in shaping the self, has been embraced by several theorists of diverse origin. For example, Mead (1934) considered the self as known through the reflections of others, Cooley (1902) conceived of the 'looking glass self', Erikson (1978) attributed discovery of the self to recognition by others, and within psychoanalytic theory, Lacan's mirror stage represents the first realisation of subjectivity when the child constructs a self based on its reflection, either in an actual mirror or in the mirror of the eyes of others (Woodward, 1997).

Gilligan (1988) is critical of the lifelessness of the image of the mirror arguing that it lacks animation and connection necessary to portray the relational nature of self. Instead, she argues, "self is known in the experience of connection and defined not by reflection but by interaction, the responsiveness of human engagement" (Gilligan, 1988: 7). What Gilligan seems to want to emphasise is the capacity for active involvement in self-construction, which I maintain cannot

be altogether denied. However, time and again I will highlight the importance of validation through interaction and dialogue to the emerging professional identity. Josselson argues

In eye-to-eye relatedness the stream of relational development and the stream of development toward separateness converge. Being responded to empathetically not only connects us to the person who is responding to us but also firms our sense of ourselves. We need others to help us to be more separate from them - more ourselves (Josselson, 1996: 103)

According to Josselson (1996: 19) relatedness and separation are “recursive processes” as they are represented perfectly in the ‘helix of evolutionary truces’ (Kegan, 1982: 109). Josselson (1994) highlights the ways in which identity becomes externally defined by others, for instance through eye-to-eye validation, but like Kegan moves beyond external definition to a stage of self-realisation. Such self-realisation could be likened to the sense of internal definition identified by Baxter Magolda (1999).

Conclusion: ‘In the beginning is relation’ (Buber, 1958: 18)

Throughout the previous discussion my aim has been to map the terrain of self/identity theory in order to make sense of the impact of professional socialisation on the selves of the OT students involved in my own research. Having considered self as a social phenomenon the reader has been introduced to debates surrounding plural versus unified notions of self. This dichotomy has been shown to be resolvable by the adoption of a dialogical conceptualisation of self as a plurality of selves unified into the one person that each of us is (Harre, 1998). This was followed by a consideration of self in the context of change and development. Change is implicit in professional socialisation yet although

research suggests that people recognise change as inevitable there seems to be a fundamental need to balance change with an element of stability

What has emerged, as a recurrent theme running through the diverse ways of looking at self/identity, is that “self does not develop in a vacuum” (Osborne, 1996 201), it is intricately linked to others with whom we interact We are human beings and human beings are social beings Acknowledging our relationality, the developmental theories explored in the later part of this chapter provide a means of understanding the dynamics of professional socialisation and the notion of the professional person as socially constructed

In this chapter and the previous chapter I have argued that predominant accounts of professional socialisation, generated through insights into the process within the ‘true’ professions, such as medicine and law, reaffirm prescriptive conceptions However, critiquing past studies as overly deterministic, I argue that the professional socialisation of OT students involved in this research reveal it to be a far more subtle and nuanced process that involves the individual trainee in a complex series of personal and interpersonal negotiations

I have shown how self/identity theorists cannot deny empirical evidence of the agency of the ‘I’ as a unifying element, which synthesises lived experiences so they are owned by the ‘me’ (McAdams, 1995) In the context of professional socialisation I suggest that the ‘I’ is responsible for synthesising experiences so that the student comes to see her/himself as an OT The fact that discourses and

practices are personalised and individualised introduces some scope for agency into the professional socialisation process through reflexive human action

Highlighting some of the ways in which contemporary practice has changed since the early studies of professional socialisation sets a backdrop that supports my perspective. Continuing social and cultural change has challenged the traditional ideology of professionalism, changing the face of the professions. Historically, people who could afford the services of the professions expected to deal with 'gentlemen', reflecting patriarchal values of the time (Macdonald, 1995), which although still evident in contemporary society have to some extent been eroded. Knowledge and expertise were a source of professional power and influence. Because recipients of professional services were not knowledgeable enough to evaluate the services of professionals, control was vested in the experts themselves (Macdonald, 1995). Nowadays, public scrutiny increasingly calls into question the ability and integrity of professionals and the adequacy of internal regulatory systems.

Professions guaranteed the efficacy of their self-regulation by publicising codes of ethics, setting up committees to deal with any breaches of codes and not least by undertaking careful recruitment and training (Eraut, 1994). The ideology underpinning the curriculum was based on social control, stability and a sense of continuity with the past (Eraut, 1994). This too has changed. The professions must be forward looking and responsive to rapid change to remain credible. Although an element of social control, expressed for example in the form of a well-defined core curriculum, may be necessary to ensure provision of the

highest quality service, there are increased opportunities for individuals to shape professions and to foster their own development within those professions

Jones (1997: 262) describes an ‘endless ping-pong’ as social theorists attempt to avoid either an overly deterministic account of social structure or an overly optimistic account of human agency. Some approaches, such as poststructuralism (McNay, 2000) lean too heavily on the influence of structures at the expense of dealing adequately with issues of agency. On the other hand, my own conceptualisation of contemporary professional socialisation may be seen as over-emphasising human agency. However, I argue that my focus on a more agentic view of the process of becoming a professional person balances the over-determinism of previous studies.

Crotty (1998) highlights how by and large interpretive research, such as this study, is uncritical and merely seeks to understand. Nevertheless, the notion of agency that has developed from a greater understanding of the professional socialisation process challenges commonly held assumptions concerning structural social order. This challenge is more closely associated with critical rather than interpretive enquiry. Crotty (1998) argues that the contrast is

“between a research that reads a situation in terms of interaction and community and a research that reads it in terms of conflict and oppression – between a research that accepts the status quo and a research that seeks to bring about change”
(Crotty, 1998: 113)

Clearly by interpreting my data through a social constructionist theoretical framework I have opted to frame my understanding in terms of interaction and

community rather than conflict and oppression without any intention to challenge the status quo I have sought to explain the phenomena evident in empirical data, which is self-limiting Had I actively wished to challenge the status quo I might well have adopted a critical theory or postmodern perspective that would have inevitably highlighted alternative discourses inherent in the professional socialisation process However, there is always the opportunity for secondary analyses

Meanwhile, overwhelming evidence from my data, which suggests that professional identity is socially constructed, justifies my choice of a social constructionist framework While I may be criticised for privileging empirical data, my aim is to provide a critically reflexive account highlighting the complexities of field research, including the ways in which, the process has been shaped by myself This account forms the focus of the following chapter

Chapter 3

Research Methodology: A Reflexive Account

Methodology

Introduction

I could imply, even subtly, that I have gained, risen, improved, grown theoretically and personally I could suggest that I have made sharp, carefully worded, clear arguments, never violating their logical trajectories However, none of these are suitable Instead, I have wavered and mis-stepped, I have gone backwards after I have gone forward, I have drifted sideways along a new imaginary, forgetting from where I had once thought I had started I have fabricated personae and unities, and I have sometimes thought I knew something of which I have written
(Scheurich, 1997: 1)

The words of James Scheurich (1997), written so candidly as an introduction to his book on research, is heartening to the inexperienced researcher The doctoral 'journey', I am convinced others would agree, at times feels just as disorientating, not only in terms of the substantive content of the thesis, but also in terms of the approach adopted in order to fulfil the purpose of the research This chapter represents a personal and reflexive account of my approach to researching the process of professional socialisation as it has been experienced by a small sample of OT students at a university in the UK The study extended over a period of three academic years from October 1996 to July 1999 during which data were gathered by means of unstructured taped interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis This account relies on sixty-two interview transcripts, field-notes and entries in a research diary, which was kept for the full duration of the research

The chapter opens by locating the research in the qualitative paradigm and justifying the choice of ethnography as the methodology adopted Thereafter follows a discussion, which situates myself as researcher in the research process

in terms of epistemological and ontological assumptions that I have brought to the research and which are inherent in the underpinning theoretical perspective. A descriptive account of how the research was initiated and conducted pays particular attention to ethical considerations, issues of gaining access and social relations in the field. My chosen research methods are outlined and modes of data analysis explored, in particular, the use of narrative analysis, which focuses on the storied nature of human lives. The narrative approach involves understanding the students' stories not simply as descriptions of events but as representations of these events through which they attempt to make sense of their experiences and construct their own identities as student OTs. Attention is paid to criteria for evaluation of narrative based research. The chapter concludes by briefly introducing the twelve students who took part in the unstructured interviews from which many ideas were generated.

Positioning the Research

My methodological approach adopted in this study has been dictated in part by the nature of the research question. Because I aimed to discover the dynamics of professional socialisation, which I recognised as a complex social process leading to personal change for the students involved, I did not consider that such a process could be understood in any depth through the adoption of a quantitative approach. Therefore, I opted to develop my understanding of the wide range of 'traditions of inquiry' (Creswell, 1998), or 'strategies of inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), embraced under the umbrella of contemporary qualitative research, which are grounded in a philosophical position, which is broadly 'interpretivist' (Mason, 1996).

Bryman (1988) suggests that researchers predominantly think about the suitability of particular research techniques in response to their research question rather than choose an approach based on intellectual issues. Certainly, a tendency towards a particular research approach is likely to be influenced by the skills that researchers, as a key resource, believe they can bring to the research (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1996). For instance, I knew that my own strengths developed through clinical practice lay in my ability to listen and to talk to people while simultaneously analysing what they have to say. My approach has therefore been to harness these skills. Nevertheless, the importance of the philosophical assumptions that underpin the 'traditions of enquiry' cannot be underestimated.

Early in the study, as a novice researcher, I felt the need to locate myself within one of the 'traditions' not least to be able to tell other people what I was doing when asked. In accordance with the methods with which I felt comfortable and seeing each tradition as distinct I identified with the phenomenological approach. Now (as I reflect on those early days and on my desperation to be able to place myself within a bounded conceptual framework) I see more overlaps and similarities in the traditions than strict boundaries that seem to be constructed by research texts (See for example, Creswell, 1998). Moreover, I have more recently come to conceptualise the traditions of enquiry as a loose framework providing scope to "devise for ourselves a research process that serves our purposes best, one that helps us more than any other to answer our research question (Crotty, 1998: 216). However, this flexibility necessitates a greater understanding of not only philosophical assumptions underpinning research, but also one's own assumptions that are brought to the research. The approach which I eventually

adopted and will discuss in greater detail presently can be broadly termed ethnographic although the aim of the study has been to understand experiences as they are lived implying a concern with phenomenological consciousness. What I have attempted to produce is a reflexive ethnography although it is only more recently that I have come to consider it as such.

Why Ethnography?

Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting (Brewer, 2000: 11).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that ethnography is the most basic type of qualitative research because it is not unlike the routine ways in which people make sense of their daily lives. However, Brewer (2000) makes a distinction between 'big' and 'little' ethnography, where the former equates with qualitative research as a whole and the latter refers to 'field research'. Even defined as field research, ethnography does not represent a coherent and clearly discernible methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000), but a general research orientation that embraces as diverse orientations as positivist ethnography, inductive ethnography, interpretive ethnography, critical ethnography and postmodern ethnography (Brewer, 2000, Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The underpinning philosophies of these approaches vary considerably, for instance inductive ethnography relies on the data itself for the generation of ideas, privileging data over and above theory and interpretation, whereas within interpretive ethnography interpretation is the primary concern. Postmodern ethnography

places more emphasis on the problems of representation and on narrative (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) (For an in-depth discussion see Brewer, 2000) However, there are some common assumptions on which ethnographic research is premised

Ethnography generally assumes that the researcher should approach the research with an open mind although it is acknowledged, “there is always some ill-defined or implicit theoretical orientation that guides the research” (Kidd & Judd, 1986 24) However, perhaps the most fundamental component of ethnography is a commitment to taking the subject’s perspective or ‘seeing through the eyes of’ the people being studied (Bryman, 1988 61) For myself this has been an important factor in the choice of an ethnographic approach to the study of professional socialisation Not only did I seek a methodology that could uncover the meaning of lived experiences of the students participating in the research but these understandings had to be seen in context, against the cultural ‘backdrop’ (Crotty, 1998 7) into which the students were being socialised Why then could this not be accomplished through the use of survey research, which would have made feasible a much larger sample with the contingent ‘benefit’ of generalisability?

I mentioned earlier that I did not feel that a quantitative approach was appropriate for the study of complex social processes In fact, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000 2) argue, while social surveys are appropriate for quantifying ‘easily measurable factors’ they cannot elucidate why things occur or their underlying meaning However, Hollway and Jefferson suggest that even qualitative

approaches may fall short of discovering the nature of phenomena since the relationship between ‘knowing’ and ‘telling’ is a complex one. They maintain “we cannot assume that participants know who they are and what makes them tick” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000: 2). What is needed is an approach that recognises the incomplete, implicit and tacit dimensions of knowledge, “the ineffable truths, unutterable partly because they are between meaning and actions” (Altheide & Johnson, 1998: 296). Because tacit knowledge is non-discursive “the key issue is not to capture the informants voice, but to elucidate the experience that is implicated by the subjects in the context of their activities as they perform them” (Altheide & Johnson, 1998: 296).

Notwithstanding the need to acknowledge the interpretive role of the researcher in the research process through recourse to reflexivity, it has been my belief that ethnography, not least through the incorporation of diverse research strategies, could provide the means to access the tacit (Altheide & Johnson, 1998), unarticulated (Giddens, 1991), and contextual understandings that other approaches may fail to elucidate. In addition, I discuss later the use of narrative analysis which, in the context of this study, has proved to be a valuable means of analysing ethnographic data and of accessing tacit knowledge.

Diverse methods of data collection make possible methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1989), which is frequently a feature of ethnography (Brewer, 2000). However, highlighting the tendency for triangulation to be regarded as a strategy to overcome problems of validity and bias in qualitative research (Denzin, 1989), Sim and Sharpe (1998) point to a need for caution in claiming to employ

triangulation. They point out that the very idea of validation tends to assume a single, objective reality, associated with positivistic notions of corroboration and verification (Silverman, 1985). Such a view accords neither with my own epistemological position or more contemporary interpretivist notions of qualitative research. However, more recently Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) have amended their position by suggesting

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation.

I clarify my own use of multiple methods as less of a strategy for confirmation and more as one for achieving an in-depth understanding of a complex social process and completeness in a world where social reality is multi-faceted (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Richardson (1994: 522) suggests that such a strategy could be more fittingly described as ‘crystallization’, befitting conceptions of the multi-faceted nature of social research, rather than triangulation. Instead of the triangle Richardson (1994) favours the crystal as a central image of validity.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves creating different colors [sic] patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose (Richardson, 1994: 522).

Positioning Myself Within the Research

“Doing qualitative research is by nature a reflexive and recursive process” (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1991: 179). According to Brewer (2000) ethnographers recognise their presence within the social world, which they seek to analyse, making reflexivity part of good practice, something that I have aimed to achieve. Stanley (1996) distinguishes between two types of reflexivity

‘analytic reflexivity’ which engages the researcher in an intellectual autobiographical account. This type of reflexivity involves not only confronting epistemological and ontological assumptions that are brought to the research but being explicit about the processes of analysis and interpretation, ‘descriptive reflexivity’ which involves a description of the research context and evidence of a critical awareness of issues such as social relations in the field, power relations and interaction of the researcher with research participants, all of which impact on the outcome of the research.

An Attempt at Analytic Reflexivity

According to Greene (1998) the influence of histories and values of the researcher should not be underestimated. Lindlof and Grubb-Swetnam (1996) suggest that problematics from the researcher’s autobiography often start the chain of thinking that leads to an idea for enquiry. I am not sure of the extent to which this was borne out in my case except that as a qualified physiotherapist I did journey some years ago through a similar professional socialisation process and found it to be an extremely challenging experience. I emerged thoroughly ‘shaped’ by a process, which by current standards may be termed militaristic. Now several years on, having moved into physiotherapy education, which incidentally has undergone fundamental change with the move into higher education, I recognise some of the resistance that I see in students because they mirror my own experiences. I would not go as far as saying that these experiences were influential in my choice of research topic but the reader should be aware that I am no stranger to some of the issues with which I engage.

Although research within the profession is in its infancy, physiotherapy retains a strong association with the sciences, which has been augmented by the recent evidence-based practice movement. Despite some indication of recognition that qualitative research, such as narrative approaches (Greenhalgh, 1999), has a contribution to make to an understanding of health care needs, much of the research in physiotherapy tends to take the form of survey research or is experimental in nature. Herein lies a dilemma. For myself, the hard scientific approach to research associated with variables, control, measurement, causality, replication and generalisation and underpinned by notions of objectivity and positivism (Bryman, 1988) lacks appeal.

From early in the doctoral journey, having been encouraged to read as widely as possible, my world-view has changed through exposure to feminist writing, social theory, anthropological and methodological texts. Once my eyes had been opened there was no going back. Feminist epistemology in particular, in terms of questioning what counts as knowledge and critique of objectivity and neutrality of the researcher, has been influential in terms of methodology. It seems that a paradox exists in the healthcare professions and healthcare research. Healthcare is dominated by women beneath the level of medics (Hugman, 1991), yet research practices could be said to represent a masculine form of knowing characterised by objectivity of its method and the value-neutrality of the scientist (Maynard, 1994). This was not something that I wished to perpetuate through my own approach.

Whereas I would not argue that my own research is feminist per se, in that gender is not a central concern, it is not political in nature and its intention is not specifically to bring about change in women's lives (Maynard, 1994), my approach is feminist in principle. For example, I have tried to nurture a non-exploitative relationship with the students who became involved in the research developing a genuine rapport with the majority of students rather than seeing them simply as a source of data. I realise that it is naive to believe that a non-hierarchical relationship between researched and researcher is possible (Skeggs, 1994). Nevertheless, the research became not only a means of sharing ideas but as I will discuss presently, an opportunity for students to explore aspects of their own development with a supportive and willing listener.

Such interaction was made possible primarily through the use of unstructured interviews, frequently considered to be a method suited to feminist research (Edwards, 1993a), although no research method is explicitly feminist or anti-feminist (Abbott & Wallace, 1997). Furthermore, because ethnography in general draws on an experiential, contextual and interpersonal approach to knowledge production it is consistent with feminist conceptions (Stacey, 1988). Finally, having recognised that my own involvement in the research is both necessary and inevitable, I have tried hard to acknowledge it through adopting a reflexive approach, which again is consistent with feminist principles (Abbott & Wallace, 1997).

‘Felt Necessities’

Justification of the chosen methodological approach and methods is “something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work” (Crotty, 1998: 2). Not only must the researcher consider epistemological and ontological assumptions embedded in the theoretical perspective that they choose to adopt, they must also develop some reflexivity about what they believe to be the nature of social reality and what counts as knowledge. Stanley (1996: 48) terms these values, commitments and pre-conceptions the ‘felt necessities’ that inspire a passion in the researcher for their topic and their approach to researching it.

Similar to most qualitative research (Crotty, 1998) this thesis is rooted in epistemological and ontological assumptions associated with constructionism. Already the reader should have gathered that I consider myself as offering a plausible way of seeing things rather than the only way of seeing things. In other words, it is suggestive rather than conclusive (Crotty, 1998). Furthermore, the theoretical perspective informing the thesis is that of social constructionism, which espouses that reality is, to varying degrees, socially constructed. In other words, “[w]e do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth” (Schwandt 2000). As each of us is born into a world of meaning, a social milieu, inevitably we view the world through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture. “Social constructionism emphasises the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things” (Crotty, 1998: 58).

On this basis I have assumed that all meaning is socially constructed and that different people will construct meaning in different ways. Therefore, in social life there are likely to be multiple constructed realities to be explored rather than an all embracing external and objective 'truth' to be discovered. Of course, that these realities will be inter-subjective and very much dependent on social processes is a key tenet of the thesis. My concern then has been to access the realities of students undergoing professional socialisation into the OT profession in order to gain some understanding of the subjective meanings that students attribute to the process of becoming OTs. Because I maintain that the social world can only be understood by occupying the frame of reference of participants, in other words, from the inside rather than the outside, I have sought to decrease the distance between participants in the research and myself as researcher. However, I acknowledge that in doing so I am myself part of the meaning-making process at several levels. If culture is so powerful in shaping the ways in which we see things then this thesis may fall victim to the 'tyranny of the familiar' (Crotty, 1998: 59). However, resolving to be as reflexive as possible and to 'bracket' my understandings in a way similar to that employed by phenomenologists may go some way to rendering the familiar strange.

To argue that all meaningful reality is socially constructed and that meaning can be constructed in different ways calls into question whether there can be a reality that exists outside individual minds. This question, which is ontological in nature, or "concerned with 'what is', with the nature of existence, with the nature of reality as such" (Crotty, 1998: 10), has proved far more difficult to come to terms with than positioning myself in terms of epistemological assumptions.

However, Harre (1998) highlights the importance of ontology by suggesting that commitment to a particular ontological position not only influences how we conduct research in terms of methods but also in how we construct explanations

Crotty (1998, 63) argues “to say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real” In fact, Berger and Luckmann (1966) maintain that society exists as both objective and subjective reality Paying particular attention to institutions, such as the professions, as part of objective reality they explain

The institutions as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts The institutions are there, external to him [sic], persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not He cannot wish them away They resist his attempts to change or evade them They have coercive power over him, both in themselves, by the sheer force of their facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to the most important of them
(Berger & Luckmann, 1966 78)

In terms of reality, it seems that social constructionism can satisfy both realist and relativist positions, enabling me to engage to a certain extent with both My tendency is to adopt a relativist position and to argue that if there is a reality that exists outside the individual we can only ever know it in the form of individual constructions However, Smith (1987) argues that what is constructed is a world that we have in common rather than a world which exists in different ways for different people although because it is socially constructed it is not fixed or final Ordinary language acts as a foundation of a common and social consciousness making society an objective real communal world for its members (Walsh, 1998b 292)

Indeed, it is difficult to deny that professions exist outside of individuals as objective realities even though humans may construct objectivity. I argue that to members of a profession and to newcomers, professions represent a structural reality worth belonging to and worth working hard to join. Professional socialisation is the means through which the objective reality, which is the social world of the profession, is interpreted for newcomers. Berger and Luckmann (1966: 79) suggest that interpretation involves a system of 'legitimizing formulas' which I argue are manifest in the social practices that I will describe in subsequent chapters. Such practices explain to the newcomer what it is to be a professional person and are aimed at promoting the internalisation of norms and values of the profession.

Descriptive Reflexivity: Entering the Field

The reader has already gained some insight into the OT course at the centre of this study and therefore to the research context. What I aim to describe briefly here is my own position in relation to the context and how issues of access, ethics and social relations were negotiated. The fact that I am a member of staff within the faculty of Health and Social Sciences enabled the adoption of an ethnographic approach to the research. Ethnography generally necessitates spending a reasonable length of time, somewhere between six months and a year (Creswell, 1998), becoming well acquainted with the culture and the people within the field. It also involves adopting techniques, which capture different aspects of the field, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, discourse analysis of natural language and documentary analysis. Such an approach would have been very difficult to adopt in other circumstances given my own part-time status as a

student and the distance of some fifty miles to the next nearest university offering an OT course I acknowledge that critics may argue that associations will have impacted on the research In fact, I agree that inevitably they have done so although I argue, not in any detrimental way but rather in helping to gain a more thorough understanding of OT education

Being a part-time researcher compromises had to be made Clearly although I wished to study change in the students over time, in the context in which they were immersed, I needed to find a compromise between continuous involvement and treating the research as a series of snapshots In effect, what the study lacked in terms of intensive immersion in the OT culture I suggest it gained through its prospective longitudinal approach This stance is supported by Ruspini (2000) who argues that longitudinal research is a means of generating 'dynamic' data with the potential to provide richer insights into processes of social change and their impact on individuals than shorter-term designs I will show how in conjunction with a period of participant observation, interviews and scrutiny of course documentation, day-to-day conversations, chance meetings and observations of staff and students all helped to develop a depth of insight which informs this thesis

My situation within the research context undoubtedly eased problems of access in that I knew the gatekeepers and the systems in place that I must negotiate Nevertheless, my identity as a member of the physiotherapy subject group could have impacted negatively on my proposal to conduct research within OT Despite our physical close proximity the two groups function independently in most

respects and very differently. However, the Subject Head in OT, as the main gatekeeper, decided that I could be trusted to conduct the research with integrity. Before I could even ask I had been offered the opportunity to either observe or participate in a Level 1 module which she suggested may develop my insight into the course.

The next step was to meet with the OT subject group to explain the research and to gain their approval. I put together a draft agreement, the main point of which was a commitment to safeguarding the interests of the group. Such a safeguard was aimed at not only ensuring anonymity in the final thesis and any subsequent publications but, at also ensuring that the group was always first to receive feedback on the course, whether positive or negative. I put to the group the conscious decision that I had made not to attempt to gain a staff perspective on the research at least until an understanding of the perspective of students had been gained. My ideas met with approval and interest, which has been sustained throughout the study.

Ethical approval from the Dean of the Faculty meant that I could progress to finding participants willing to take part in interviews. This was done by presenting my ideas to the whole group of freshers (89 in total) only weeks into their course and asking for volunteers for the study. Although voluntary sampling can be criticised on the grounds that the sample being self-selected is unlikely to be representative of the whole group (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994), my priority was to find students who were interested enough to commit themselves to a series of interviews over a three year period. The group

were appraised of the ground rules that I intended to set and their rights should they choose to become involved. These rights included confidentiality, anonymity, to be fully informed as to the purpose of the research and of potential audiences for the research, to express ideas and views, to ask for information to be recalled or changed, to negotiate and renegotiate frequency of contact and venue for meetings, to terminate their role in the research at any time and for whatever reason. In order to clarify the research relationship I incorporated in the agreement a statement that I would take no responsibility for counselling students.

Twelve students volunteered. Their reasons for becoming involved varied. The potential for gaining greater insight into the mechanics of conducting research, in preparation for their own research projects in their final year, was cited by several students. Others were interested in the research as a means of charting their progress through the course. Clearly the majority of the students saw themselves involved in a research bargain, which seemed only fair. The group were not representative of the whole group in that school-leavers were under-represented and mature students over-represented.

Furthermore, four of the eleven men on the course volunteered making the proportion of men high. Nevertheless, all of the students were interested and motivated to be involved in the study. I was aware that commencing the study with a small sample of twelve students might compromise the research if several were to drop out. However, I reasoned that if I aimed to develop a larger sample I might struggle to give them the time needed to engage them in the study. I

gambled that it would be preferable to use my limited time resources to develop a good rapport with a smaller group of students and although two students did not complete the study my gamble did pay off in that ten students saw the study through to its conclusion

Stacey (1988) argues that ethnography is potentially the most exploitative research approach because of the involvement and intensity inherent in its methods. However, it has always been my intention to engage in enquiry *with* people rather than pursuing research *on* people (Reason & Marshall, 1994). I certainly wanted students to take something away from the research, which several did. The students appeared to enjoy their involvement in the study not least because they often initiated contact with me when they felt that they had not seen me for a while.

At the same time, just as Skeggs (1994) found in her ethnographic study of women in further education, I do not believe that the students were prepared to be exploited which I will discuss presently. My interviewees certainly never indicated feelings of being exploited, although it is perhaps true to say that reciprocity is more difficult to achieve within the context of participant observation. Likewise I had no intention of exploiting the members of staff who had placed their trust in me to conduct research, which would be in no way detrimental to the group. Having come to the study of professional socialisation of students into the OT profession with limited knowledge of OT or OT education I considered myself to be an 'outsider'. However, over time I perceived

my status shifting subtly to that of ‘insider’ as trust between myself, students and staff developed and I became familiar with the culture of the group

There is debate over the extent to which researchers should allow themselves to become immersed in the field (Coffey, 1999). For instance, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 115) suggest that a “comfortable sense of being at home is a danger signal” in that the researcher risks losing a critical analytical perspective. Nevertheless, Coffey (1999) argues that so long as the researcher acknowledges and critically engages with issues springing from their own involvement, immersion in the field is a definite strength of ethnography. Accordingly, in addition to describing this ethnographic study as inductive and interpretive, through its emphasis on narrative representation, I have endeavoured to make it reflexive. However, as Coffey (1999) suggests it would be self-centred to assume that I became part of the setting to the extent that I cannot remain critically analytical albeit that I have been called ‘an honorary OT’, revealing that I am perceived to be a ‘friend of the setting’ (Coffey, 1999: 37).

In the Field: ‘*Inter Views*’

Kvale (1996: 3) suggests “[i]f you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?” Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. However, the research interview is a specific type of ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984: 102) which tends to be fall into one of two types: the ‘structured’ and the ‘unstructured’ (Burgess, 1984; Mason, 1996). Structured interviews in their extreme form tend to conform to what Franklin (1997) terms the ‘information extraction’

model Franklin associates this model with strategies such as the use of a standardised set of questions asked in a pre-determined order, the interviewee taking a passive role and the researcher maintaining a distance in order to avoid compromising objectivity. This approach typifies everything that I did not want my approach to be, although in view of time constraints, I did envisage the need for some degree of structure.

However, Franklin (1997) offers an alternative and more flexible approach based on 'shared understanding' in which the interview is construed as an interpersonal experience in which the interviewer is involved in attempts at clarification and tentative interpretation of the life experiences of the interviewee. A similar type of approach is advocated by Kvale (1996: 2) who sees the qualitative research interview as "a construction site of knowledge". He suggests that an interview "is literally an *inter view*, an inter change [sic] of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996: 2).

The 'shared understanding' or 'inter view' approach with its emphasis on interpersonal relations and the idea that the interview is a dynamic interaction through which social reality may be constructed held greater appeal. This approach seemed to openly acknowledge the interrelational nature of knowledge generated in the interview context (Mishler, 1986) with which I felt comfortable. As the research progressed the dialogical nature of the interviews meant that both the students and myself began to engage in increasingly interpretive conversations. I found myself sharing

insights offered by theoretical analysis, which students were either able to affirm or to challenge and in this way we each developed and modified our understandings of the process of professional socialisation. Such 'conditioning' of research participants has been considered problematic (Ruspini, 2000) in terms of interfering with objectivity. However, my own view has been to see it as beneficial both to myself and to the students.

It is through dialogical interaction characterised by trust, openness and respect that mutual self-disclosure and self-discovery can occur (Eyring, 1998). Certainly the interviews gave students the opportunity for reflection on some challenging issues, which in some cases resulted in reassurance and increased insight, that otherwise may not have been achieved. However, the research relationship is a construction site for complex interaction. Having read the abundant literature on research interviewing I had entered the field with an awareness of how social cues, such as gender, age, ethnicity, social class and educational background (Burgess, 1984, Brewer, 2000), all of which are impossible to change, impact on the researcher/research participant relationship. In fact, I did experience something of a problem with one male student whom I felt, despite my attempts to establish a climate of reciprocity, was never entirely comfortable during interviews and therefore was less forthcoming. Fortunately, gender difference appeared to be less problematic for the other male students. However, reflection on my interaction with this particular male student highlights how, if one is not careful, some voices are privileged over others. Perhaps this is inevitable when, for instance, the researcher identifies more closely with some participants than others.

I had not considered the more subtle complexities of interaction, for instance, shifting power differentials and the notion that interviewees may actively resist questioning or even steer the direction of a research interview to satisfy some personal need (Scheurich, 1997) Scheurich shares his own experience of interviewing with which I began to identify

I find that interviewees carve out space of their own, that they can often control some or part of the interview, that they push against or resist my goals, my intentions, my questions, my meanings The interviewee may play out a persona just for the satisfaction of the play may practice stories about herself or himself (Scheurich, 1997 71-72)

As Oppenheim (1992 67) suggests “listen[ing] with the third ear” is imperative if one is to recognise not only what is being said but also what is being omitted However, as Scheurich (1997) points out

The interview interaction is fundamentally indeterminate - the complex play of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, power, desires, and needs on the part of both the interviewer and interviewee (Scheurich, 1997 73)

The construction of an interpretation of interview data based on such ‘indeterminate ambiguity’ (Scheurich, 1997 73), would struggle to reflect any stable reality or meaning, should this be the aim of the research I acknowledge that as the author of this account I may have created a ‘false order’ (Scheurich, 1997 74), in presenting an interpretation of interviewee accounts Nevertheless, I argue that because the accounts were revisited and affirmed through a dialogical approach the responsibility for what has been written has been at least partially shared

The interviews, which generally lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, were audio taped and fully transcribed (see Appendix 5 – Selected Interview Guides)

The first set of interviews were semi-structured by a set of questions intended to elicit biographical information which enabled me to establish a sketch of each student at their point of entry to the course and a feel for the whole sample. So far, so good. The second set of interviews when transcribed took on an entirely different feel. These interviews had involved a greater number of open questions with the purpose of encouraging the students to reflect on their first few months of the course. Less structure seemed to encourage the students to relax and so too I must have relaxed because transcription revealed that several of the students had engaged in fairly lengthy stories which at that point I viewed as 'ramblings' (Measor, 1985) hardly worthy of full transcription. I made a point of preparing what I thought was a more focused list of questions in preparation for the next set of interviews over which I promised myself I would retain more control.

In the interim, I had begun to read a book entitled 'Healing dramas and clinical plots: The narrative structure of experience' (Mattingly, 1998) with the purpose of attempting to broaden my understanding of the nature of OT. However, this book proved to be highly influential in shaping both data collection and data analysis from this point in the research onwards. Mattingley (1998) made clear the tendency for storytelling to play an important role in shaping the work of OTs, as she explains

Stories have many purposes in [OTs] work lives. They tell stories of clinical experiences, their own or others, to entertain, to gossip, to confess, to argue, to reveal who they are. Often they tell stories, especially about work experiences which are puzzling, powerful or disturbing, in order to render those experiences more sensible. Storytelling offers one way of making sense of what has happened and this makes stories essential to practice (Mattingly, 1998: 5-6)

Mattingley highlighted not only the relevance of narrative to contemporary OT culture, but also its potential as a powerful analytical and methodological tool which offers a means of gaining insight into the relationship between individual lives and social processes (Rappoport, 1993) such as professional socialisation. Despite criticism of the tendency to essentialise story-telling (Scheurich, 1997) there is convincing support in the literature to suggest that “[s]torytelling is a fundamental form of human communication” (Atkinson, 1998: 1). “People are storytellers by nature” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998: 7) and stories provide a means of understanding the inner world of individuals.

[S]tories imitate life and present an inner reality to an outside world, at the same time, however, they shape and construct the narrator’s personality and reality. The story *is* one’s identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell (Lieblich et al, 1998: 7).

In a social constructionist account of narrative, Gergen (2000: 2) reiterates how “social constructionism brackets the problem of individual minds - as the locus of origin, comprehension, or storage of narrative”. Nevertheless, viewing narrative as discourse or a ‘discursive mode of generating intelligibility’ (Gergen, 2000: 5) he suggests that it has an important social function in that narration both reflects and creates cultural values. Although Gergen places emphasis on social processes rather than on the individual, he reinforces the appropriateness of the use of a narrative approach as a means of exploring the process of professional socialisation.

However, to adopt a narrative approach to the interview is not only to sacrifice structure to a large degree, but also to forfeit the responsibility for the import of what is said (Chase, 1995) I had not envisaged getting involved in unstructured interviews, discouraged by the warning that “the freedom to talk has the potential to encourage long, detailed and rambling stories” (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 96) Nevertheless, having recognised that such stories are filled with personal meaning I became increasingly convinced that stories were precisely what I wished to encourage As Polkinghorne (1988: 164) suggests “narratives are context sensitive, both in their telling and in the meaning they give to events, and their form and content are responsive to the aims and conditions of the interview situation” I became more committed to the idea of a minimal number of questions, which supported extended responses and opened areas for discussion

Mishler (1986) suggests that the impulse to narrate is so typically human that interviewees will tell stories even if they are not encouraged to do so However, I found that I needed to encourage ‘life stories’ or stories about life experiences, using cues such as ‘how did you get on on placement?’ or ‘tell me about your experience’, changing not only my own conception of the interview interaction but also that of the students I was in effect inviting students to turn their personal experiences into stories According to Polanyi (1985: 9), “competent language users can recognise when a story is being told The talk moves out of the here and now of the conversation into a storyworld another time, often another location, populated by other participants” However, I suggest that stories are not always so easily discernible

Over the course of the three years during which the interviews took place I could say that they became less and less structured. However, similar to Collins (1998) I recognised that the most unstructured interview is structured at several levels, particularly where the research is longitudinal in nature. For instance, by virtue of a dialogical approach to interviews, the students developed an increased acquaintance with the research therefore the whole study became structured by ongoing interpretations and by theoretical analyses. Furthermore, the research was structured in terms of the selves that were brought to it. The students talked in terms of multiple selves, predominantly their student selves, caring selves and professional selves, which varied in salience at different points in the research.

Likewise I found that I too brought several different selves, some less familiar than others, to the research, although as has been suggested, I sometimes seemed to have limited control over who I was during interviews (Collins, 1998). Notwithstanding an awareness that research relationships are hierarchical on the grounds of power and difference (Skeggs, 1994) I endeavoured to present my 'student self' to the students, for example, dressing casually when we met. Although I was not a full-time student, my interviewees did seem to identify with me as a student possibly because, like themselves, they were aware of my working to deadlines and my uncertainties. Nevertheless, there can be no denying that the students were aware of my status as a member of staff in the university no matter how much I tried to play it down. Yet in some respects my 'academic self' seemed to be almost inconsequential, even useful, and something that worried me more than the students as their candour during interviews suggested. At times I wondered if the students actually hoped that I would do more with the

ideas that they related during interviews than treat them as data, for instance feeding discontent back to the subject group. On several occasions I agreed to “put on my academic hat”, acting as sounding board, useful to students because I was outside their formal support mechanisms.

Where views and advice were sought on other issues the fine line between the ‘listening self’ and ‘counselling self’ created dilemmas that I had hoped to avoid. Eyring (1998) suggests that interviews are inherently therapeutic in that they offer the opportunity to talk about personally relevant issues to someone who provides undivided attention. However, the research literature warns against the development of a therapeutic relationship (Seidman, 1991) on the basis that the researcher is there to learn, not to treat the participant. Nevertheless, the suggestion that caution should be exercised when approaching more personal topics seems rather naive (Seidman, 1991), particularly when regardless of statements to the contrary one is seen as someone who could offer useful advice.

Despite not being formally equipped with counselling skills and recognising at the outset that counselling was very much outside of my remit, I found myself increasingly struggling to remain neutral during some conversations. The dilemma surrounding the blurred boundaries between listening, empathising and counselling became for me particularly challenging, illustrating how research can impact on the researcher in fundamental ways. Although the capacity for research participants to develop greater personal insight leading to change as a consequence of their involvement in research has been well recognised (Menard,

1991), the potential impact of research on the researcher has only more recently been acknowledged (Coffey, 1999) and certainly warrants further research

A Word on Critical Incident Technique

One of my concerns stemming from the study design were the limitations caused by interviewing students at discrete points in time (Ruspini, 2000) with the potential for experiences to fade from memory prior to our next meeting. My response to this perceived problem was to introduce a system whereby students were asked to record in writing any 'critical incidents' that occurred between meetings. The 'critical incident technique' devised by Flanagan (1954: 327) is recommended as a flexible set of principles "for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria"

In effect, critical incidents are brief descriptions of significant events accompanied by an account of the reasons why the event was significant. Brookfield (1990) highlights how because they are rooted in the phenomenological research tradition, critical incidents are a means of probing assumptive worlds. The OT students were asked to record any incident that had either a positive or negative impact on their sense of becoming an OT. The incidents, which were either handed or sent to me, were then discussed during the course of the next interview.

Participant Observation

Fieldwork Notes Extract - November 1996

The group sat in a much smaller circle this week and there was a lot of chatter before we began. I suppose people are starting to get to

know one another by now I recognise that I'll always be on the margins News round [an icebreaking exercise where each person says something about their week] is getting more personal as we relax and know what to expect Everyone joined in Jenny's admission that she's been very unhappy over the past few weeks having moved to university seemed to trigger a round of self-disclosure Sarah said that she was considering leaving the course because she feels that she is too young to do it justice [? perceived need for maturity] The session focused on roles What role would we ideally like to play on TV? Answers 'a baddy trying to become good', 'a hero', [there were lots of heroines], 'someone who helps other people' [? virtue]

The excerpt above typifies regular entries into a fieldwork note book, made directly following involvement in a weekly two hour session on an 'Interactive Processes' module that I had been invited to join The basis of my interaction with the group of fifteen students was left to me to decide and I opted to join the group as a participant rather than as a pure observer, which offers the opportunity for both 'unobtrusive observation' and 'participant comprehension' (Collins, 1984: 56) Bryman (1988: 113) suggests that the participant observer should try to become part of the scenery, and hence largely invisible within the group Therefore, I attempted to immerse myself in the activities although always aware that my presence had the potential to effect what was observed Note taking in this context was impossible and I resorted to recording as much as I could about the session immediately following its completion

Fieldnotes are the core of ethnographic work (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995), which ideally are packaged into substantive, methodological and analytic notes (Burgess, 1984) for ease of analysis However, Coffey (1999: 120) suggests that 'tidying' field notes into neat categories may be indicative of the 'uncomfortableness' that has been felt in including the personal as part of the fieldwork process My own fieldnotes were not 'tidied' or carved up in this way

to make them physically distinct, primarily because I found it much easier to think of the total experience and to write each session as a narrative. More general observations over the three-year period were recorded in just the same way as vignettes of observed interactions or my own interaction with students and staff. As a consequence my own fieldnotes are messy and fragmented, sometimes scraps of paper stuck into a diary, which as Coffey (1999) suggests is more frequently the case. Nevertheless, they were an important primary source of data, which proved helpful in developing theoretical insight into the field and a broader understanding of the context of professional socialisation.

Documents as a Data Source

Documentary materials are frequently considered to provide secondary data (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997) or ‘mute evidence’ (Hodder, 2000: 703) when used in conjunction with other techniques of data-collection. Nevertheless, Hodder (2000) points out that documents can be important to qualitative researchers because the information that they provide, the ‘documentary reality’ (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997: 46), may differ from that which is available in spoken form. Therefore, despite the fact that the spoken is usually privileged over the written (Hodder, 2000), the scrutiny of documentary evidence is considered useful to the ethnographer because cultures are self-documenting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Atkinson & Coffey, 1997). Documentation, such as the course prospectus, course documents and student handbooks accessed during the course of this study have provided valuable insight into how OTs “represent themselves collectively to themselves and to others” (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997: 45).

Aware that texts have to be understood in the context of the conditions under which they are produced and read and also that they can “say different things in different contexts” (Hodder, 2000 704), it has been helpful that I have been able to clarify aspects of the documentation with staff. However interestingly, as Hodder (2000) suggests may occur, the staff were at times unable to articulate cultural meanings implicit in the course document. Not only does this reinforce Usher and Edward’s (1994) belief that educators may practice within certain frameworks without necessarily recognising it, it also illustrates how documentary evidence provides another means of exploring the cultural context taken for granted by insiders and therefore unlikely to be articulated. Furthermore, it indicates “the meanings of institutional texts are always potentially unstable because they are always open to reinterpretation” (Miller, 1997 83).

Approach to Analysis

Lincoln & Guba (1985 333) point out that the process of data analysis “is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes”. While I agree with the suggestion that construction and reconstruction will occur the above description seems to suggest that analysis represents a distinct, possibly end phase of the research process.

However, in ethnography the analysis of data is not confined to a distinct period but rather is part of an iterative process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) so that data collection and data analysis almost become seamless. Establishing an

ongoing familiarity with the data means that it can be used to ‘think with’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 210) and this is what I have attempted to do throughout the research

Use of Different Types of Data

The data yielded by course documents, participant observation and interviews informed my thinking in different ways. Interview data were privileged over the other types of data for several reasons. The longitudinal nature of the research not only produced a prolific amount of interview data, but also data that were dynamic, allowing progressive insight to evolve, which provided greater breadth and depth of understanding of the issues involved. Furthermore, interviews gave direct access to student experiences, reflecting the focus of the research on the lived experience of individuals.

Documentary and observational data were used to contextualise the research and to validate developing ideas. Documentary material was particularly helpful during the initial stages of the study in establishing a basic working knowledge of the course structure and content. However, course documents were re-visited for more analytical purposes once themes began to emerge from interview data. For instance, perceived tensions between the scientific and social foundations of OT knowledge that troubled students (see chapter 4), which first became apparent from interview data, were also evident as a discernable discourse within the course document.

While documentary analysis validated and developed broad understandings of the course, an intense period of participant observation within one specific module (see Appendix 3 - Module Descriptor) helped to develop focused insight. The data generated from participant observation highlighted the importance of the acquisition of self-analytical skills for student OTs, confirming my developing ideas and deepening analysis through informing subsequent interview questions. I argue that the range of methods employed were complimentary and helped to achieve an in-depth understanding of a complex, multifaceted social process (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

Bryman and Burgess (1994) suggest that much of the work in which researchers engage, in the analysis phase of research, is as much implicit as explicit, resulting in difficulties in articulating how data has been analysed. “The reasons why we choose some ideas rather than others are not always immediately obvious to us nor are there necessarily logical reasons for our choices and decisions” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Nevertheless, paying heed to advice that decisions about analysis should be made prior to the collection of a vast quantity of data (Kvale, 1996), I considered the various modes of analysis and their applicability to the types of data I envisaged generating, most specifically the interview data.

Considering what have been termed ‘general strategies’ for data analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994), namely grounded theory and analytic induction, I decided that neither really felt appropriate. Both seemed to represent a rather scientific route to analysis, albeit that grounded theory is ‘grounded’ in the accounts of those being studied. Nevertheless, the general processes of coding

data, looking for themes or generating concepts and creating categories all of which are well documented (Dey, 1993, Silverman, 1993, Bryman & Burgess, 1994, Miles & Huberman, 1994) seemed to provide a reasonable way forward. That is, at least until I discovered narrative enquiry which was to change my whole approach.

Bruner's Alternative 'Ways of Knowing'

Bruner (1986) distinguishes between two modes of cognitive functioning, or two ways in which we know about the world. These are the paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode and the narrative or storied-knowing mode. Because paradigmatic knowledge focuses on what is common among actions, this type of cognition has tended to be considered the exclusive cognitive mode for the generation of trustworthy and valid data (Polkinghorne, 1995). That was until Bruner (1986) put forward the notion that narrative knowledge was a legitimate form of reasoned knowing. In contrast to paradigmatic cognition, narrative cognition represents a storied approach to making sense of why a person has acted in a certain way and focuses on the particular and special characteristics of their actions rather than trying to generalise their stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Bruner (1986: 11) illustrates how the two differ by suggesting that one gives rise to a 'well-formed argument' and the other to a 'good story' convincing by its lifelikeness.

Although Bruner (1986) uses the terms 'story' and 'narrative' interchangeably a distinction made by Franklin (1997) is helpful in clarifying the use of the two terms. Franklin (1997) refers to a description of events that form a story, as

‘narrative representation’ Tierney (1993) points out that the way in which a story is told is very much dependent on the storyteller’s audience, reinforcing the notion that the story is a form of self-presentation, which functions to express, confirm and validate a certain type of identity (Polkinghorne, 1988) The term ‘underlying narrative’ refers to the meaning underpinning a story or series of stories that is imposed either by the person themselves or by the interpreter (Franklin, 1997 106)

What makes narrative enquiry different to other types of qualitative research is that data is in the form of stories Rather than focusing on first-person accounts of events that are used to establish meaning, the focus is on the stories that informants create around those events and how they are constructed and interpreted The data is also diachronic in nature, in other words, it contains temporal information about the sequential relationship of events rather than simple direct answers to questions put by an interviewer (Polkinghorne, 1995)

Principles of Analysing Narrative Data

There are many ways of analysing narrative representations or stories (Lieblich et al, 1998) For instance, there is a vast literature stemming from the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997) concerning linguistic analysis, which involves consideration of structural form and textual function of the narrative Lieblich et al (1998) identify several ways of reading, interpreting and analysing narrative material, which combine paying attention to form and content My own approach most closely resembles ‘categorical content’ and ‘holistic content’ approaches (Lieblich et al, 1998 12-13) since I have focused almost exclusively on content

as opposed to form I have used the stories themselves as a means of understanding the experiences of students and to search for underlying narratives because they are deemed to be particularly “useful for what they reveal about social life - culture ‘speaks itself’ through an individual’s story” (Riessman, 1993: 5). Having decided whether analysis should focus on content or form of data, there are two alternative ways in which narrative data can be utilised to develop an understanding of a phenomenon. The two approaches arise from the distinction between paradigmatic and storied modes of knowing.

The first method of analysis, termed ‘analysis of narratives’ because it looks across the entire sample taking in many stories, results in paradigmatic categories that hold across accounts. Paradigmatic analysis is not unlike the analysis that occurs in most qualitative research where the aim is to bring order to experience and to identify common themes across the data. The primary difference is in the nature of the data, which is in the form of stories. Because an analysis of narratives tends to uncover commonalities across stories, characters, or settings, the strength of this approach is in its ability to generate knowledge of abstract, general concepts from a set of particular instances (Polkinghorne, 1995). One criticism of paradigmatic analysis is that because it focuses on the creation and saturation of categories, data are used in a decontextualised and depersonalised way, underplaying the unique and particular aspects of individual stories.

The second approach to analysis, termed ‘narrative analysis’, is rather different. In research that adopts a ‘narrative analysis’ approach, data is used to produce a story that renders an explanation of some kind, similar to a case study.

(Polkinghorne, 1995) The aim of this type of analysis is not to focus on commonalities across data but to explore the meaning of a phenomenon for one individual, recognising that each person's experience will differ. There is no attempt to move from a specific case to generalisation. To produce the story, data are synthesised rather than separated into constituent parts by means of a plot tying together the experiences of individuals and creating the context for meaning-making (Polkinghorne, 1995). Stories also bring order to experience because they need to be bounded by time, in other words, they require a beginning, middle and end. However, the approach allows the researcher to treat the data in a more holistic way that may offer a greater depth of insight than paradigmatic analysis. The written representation is likely to contain longer extracts of transcript from a single individual rather than short extracts of transcript from several sources, which in effect fragment stories. However, the "transformation of persons into portraits" (Stronach & MacLure, 1997: 34), which occurs as a consequence of narrative analysis, is not wholly unproblematic as is discussed presently.

Combining the Two Approaches

My own approach to analysis has been to employ both an analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. In describing what the approaches have to offer, Polkinghorne (1995: 12) notes that "analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements and narrative analysis moves from common elements to stories". Both approaches produce valuable insights depending upon the value placed on different cognitive forms.

Paradigmatic thought is deemed to be powerful because it is seen as “link[ing] the particular to the formal (Polkinghorne, 1995: 10), which I identified as an important aim at PhD level. Furthermore, research identified as employing narrative enquiry has tended to use paradigmatic analysis rather than narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), therefore there is a predominance of this type of research from which to learn. These factors had the effect of making the approach feel conventional and therefore a safe option for analysis at doctoral level. Hence the four data chapters that follow are based on paradigmatic categories identified across the stories of individual students.

Despite feeling satisfied that the choice of categories, that will be explained presently, would provide breadth of insight into the complexities of professional socialisation, I struggled with the idea of a final account based solely on paradigmatic categories. I reasoned that such a depersonalised and decontextualised account would not reflect the nuanced and very personal experiences of the students. My response was to opt for a compromise between highlighting common elements and producing several stories that achieve an improved understanding of the professional socialisation process, add interest to the thesis and should satisfy examiners. For instance, chapter 6 adopts the form of a story of two students and how they came to terms with the notion of caring in professional life. Although caring was identified as a paradigmatic category I argue that by focusing on particular individuals our understanding of this emotional and deeply personal aspect of practice is enhanced.

Nevertheless, I have been mindful that stories carry the connotation of falsehood, or misrepresentation and acknowledge that a story is not a neutral representation of the research findings but rather a composition. Furthermore, because the researcher must present the characters in sufficient detail so as to appear as unique individuals in a particular situation, there are implications in creating 'portraits' that cannot be overlooked. Stronach and MacLure (1997: 53) develop a thought-provoking critique of the untroubled way in which researchers turn persons into portraits, that emphasises the authority of the author and the "tyranny of the text". They highlight how the author might influence the way a story is constructed. For instance, one might ask whether caring, as it is portrayed in chapter 6, was as important an aspect of professional socialisation for Carol and Dan as I have conveyed, or whether my own experiences as a healthcare professional led me to privilege this theme. Stronach and MacLure (1997: 53) argue that if readers find stories such as Carol and Dan's 'real', 'rounded', or 'plausible' this is "attributable to the tyranny of the text and its control over the reader's options than to methodological astuteness or empathy between the writer and the subject".

As well as advocating a need for greater attention to reflexivity in the production of stories, Stronach and MacLure encourage a greater degree of scepticism in readers who may be inclined to take stories at face value rather than seeing the link between the person and the portrait as tenuous. Stronach and MacLure (1997) suggest that

The researcher's task is to 'represent' the subject in a double sense first, in the artistic meaning of the word, to make a realistic likeness,

but, second, to act as a kind of agent for the subject, to ‘represent’ her interests and ensure that her ‘voice’ is heard”
(Stronach & MacLure, 1997 34-35)

There is a tendency for the second task to result in accounts being celebratory of the individual (Stronach & MacLure, 1997) and certainly this holds true in the case of Carol and Dan whose stories are featured in chapter 6. However, the vignette of Lisa in chapter 5, despite closing by celebrating Lisa’s finding of her internal sense of self, overall paints a less than complimentary portrait. The story was the result of a collaborative effort between Lisa and myself that possibly reflects her low level of self-esteem throughout the research, highlighting how narrative analysis can develop an understanding of the temporal and contextual nature of experience. However, the notion of collaboration critiqued earlier in the chapter, is also problematised by Stronach and MacLure (1997) who prefer to conceptualise the relationship between the researcher and subject as a ‘struggle’. For instance, they highlight how the production of a tidy, coherent textual structure might misrepresent the subject’s picture of the self and how the subject might attempt to revise the portrait in subsequent interviews. As Riessman (1993 15) points out “All the reader has is the analyst’s representation – all forms of representation are limited portraits”

Practical Steps of Analysis

Just as the two approaches to narrative enquiry generate different types of knowledge they also involve very different processes that demand different skills from the researcher

Creating Paradigmatic Categories

Riessman (1993) describes the physical process of paradigmatic analysis. The analytical process begins by reading through transcripts and identifying selected portions, or what she terms 'narrative segments', for detailed analysis across a number of accounts (Riessman, 1993: 58). This stage, which Riessman likens to analytic induction, is said to frequently give rise to a focus for analysis and in fact did lead to the generation of the four major categories which form the main narratives in the thesis.

Each single transcript was meticulously read and segments of transcript relating to different narratives were colour-coded with highlighter pens. Once this process was completed, segments relating to a particular theme or narrative, such as support mechanisms, were cut and pasted into a composite file. Care was taken to identify each segment by student name and transcript number for reference should I have wished to refer back to the original transcript. A miscellaneous file contained segments that were interesting but unrelated to the main narratives. This process is complex and requires an ability to manipulate and organise large amounts of data in a systematic way. However, the outcome was a bank of data extracted from transcripts of all of the students, which was sorted in relation to a number of broad categories.

The longitudinal nature of the study allowed me to feed back the emerging themes, which resulted from reading and re-reading earlier transcripts, into later interviews. This process of progressive focusing inevitably resulted in concentration on some themes at the expense of others. For instance, the

‘honeymoon period’, experienced by several students at the beginning of the course, may have been worthy of further exploration. However, my perception that this phenomenon was likely to be common to students on most courses discouraged me from pursuing this further. Likewise, the low academic esteem, which a number of students interviewed seemed to exhibit, may have been usefully explored in relation to the admissions policy (see Appendix 1) had this appeared to have a significant influence on subsequent professional socialisation, which in fact it did not. While many themes, such as those identified above, were extracted from the data early in the study, those that were selected to form the core of the four data chapters that follow were generally supported across the sample of students, as well as being reiterated at various stages of the study and well supported by the literature.

The four narratives, which are a combination of smaller themes, emerged at different stages in the research process. The first two narratives focusing on ‘tensions and uncertainties in OT education’ and ‘stability and change’ became evident early in the research, during the students’ first year within the university. The narratives are closely related through the experiences of students who have recognised the complexity and demands of their chosen profession and who are going through a process of identification with new ‘selves’ that were both exciting and threatening. The fact that every student involved in the study discussed their uncertainties and vulnerabilities in terms of the demands of the course and self-perceived change convinced me that these aspects of the experience were key to understanding the professional socialisation process.

During the latter part of the course there was some resolution of the uncertainties. However, worries were subsumed by not dissimilar apprehensions and uncertainties about the de-stabilising transition into employment, suggesting that these two narratives are inextricably linked throughout life. Despite concerns that featured fairly prominently in the closing stages of the study I chose to overlook the potential to explore in any depth the students' thoughts about the transition into practice post-qualification. My attitude at the time was to exclude data concerned with the transition into employment in that it represented a whole new phase distinct from undergraduate experience, which was my prime focus. Although space did not allow for the inclusion of a theme concerned with making the step into practice, the end-stage of anticipatory socialisation is inherent in the entire professional socialisation process and as such could provide a focus for extending analyses.

The narrative of 'virtuous therapists' emerged following the students' first fieldwork placement and their initial exposure to caring in a professional capacity. However, the narrative was strengthened following subsequent encounters with clients. Again every student was confronted by the caring aspects of OT practice and engaged with the impact of caring on their own personal and professional identities. The centrality of this theme to the thesis became evident on the recognition of extensive support in the literature with regard to the notion of virtue in the healthcare professions and its profound impact on practitioners.

The final narrative of 'becoming a professional person', was the last to be configured in order to provide a means of making sense of the overall experience.

Representing an accumulation of themes based on the varied ways that students came to terms with assuming the professional identity of an OT, it also engages with the varied extent to which individuals are moulded into conformity. This narrative, although not supported to any great extent by existing literature, explicitly challenges the purely deterministic aspect of professional socialisation, and therefore is key to the main thrust of the thesis.

Creating a Story

The process involved in narrative analysis involves reconsidering data in a very different way. Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that the creation of a story or the configuration process often begins at the stories end. By specifying the outcome, such as in this study recognising the complexity of notions of caring, the researcher locates a viewing point, which constitutes a plot, from which to select data events necessary for producing the conclusion.

The narrative of virtuous therapists had been identified through paradigmatic analysis early in the study. However, the complexity of this narrative seemed to demand a deeper level of analysis that could be achieved through the configuration of a story. It could be argued that my rationale for writing this story was to see it as a more powerful way of convincing the reader of the 'authenticity' of this narrative (Stronach & MacLure, 1997). However, the configuration process involved selecting Carol and Dan who, on first reading, each portrayed different experiences of learning to care in a professional sense. The stories of other students could have been included had space allowed.

The transcripts for each student were read in their entirety. Extracts relating to events involving care, portraying caring episodes, or reflections on the experience of caring in terms of self or others were selected, highlighted and arranged in chronological order. Connections or influences among events and underlying propositions were identified as constituting a plot, around which the story was written. The plot for Carol and Dan's stories was the tension between subordinating self in favour of the needs of others and recognition of personal need.

Narrative analysis requires patience to read and re-read sections of transcript while asking why certain stories are being told in a certain way to this listener (Riessman, 1993). Furthermore, being able to synthesise excerpts from one-line comments to entire stories to render a plausible explanation of some kind involves creativity. The plot is an intellectual construction that involves considerable interpretation, the story a textual product, but then all researchers "shape the experienced reality" not least through "written products [which] are crafted works" (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1997: 8).

Attention to 'The Trinity': Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

Narrative research falls within an interpretive perspective based on the notion that "narrative materials - like reality itself - can be read, understood and analyzed in extremely diverse ways" (Lieblich et al, 1998: 171). Hence, Lieblich et al (1998) suggest that narratives should not be taken at face value as complete and accurate representations of reality. Likewise, Riessman (1993: 64) argues that a personal narrative should not be read as an exact record of what happened,

nor is it a “mirror of the world ‘out there’” Therefore, like other interpretive approaches the efficacy and appropriateness of narrative is challenged in terms of the relationship of the story to the events to which it refers (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000)

This methodological account would not be complete without paying some attention to the issues of credibility. However, issues of validity, reliability and generalisability are clearly problematic concepts in the context of research that assumes that there are multiple realities and no single universal truth to be captured. Whereas there may be some grounds for evaluating paradigmatic narrative research by standard practices, which pay attention to validity, reliability and generalisability, evaluation of a configured plot is more complex.

The need for alternative criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research has been well recognised and addressed in various ways (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Mishler, 1986, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Janesick, 2000). For instance, Lincoln & Guba (1985) substitute ‘trustworthiness’ for validity arguing that qualitative researchers should pay attention to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. However, Scheurich (1997: 82) argues that criteria such as trustworthiness are just another expression of validity “which wears different epistemological masks”. Instead Scheurich (1997: 88) advocates a need to reconstruct ‘validity’ or truth as many sided or multiply perspectival, as shifting and complex.

However, by suggesting that validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description, there is no claim that there should be only one way of interpreting data (Janesick, 2000). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) maintain that the plausibility of the story, or its explanatory power to produce coherence among the situated, contextual and particular elements of the data, is important. Moreover, the narrative should be evaluated purely in terms of its capacity to provide the reader with insight and understanding (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Generalisation is more problematic, prompting the suggestion that it should be replaced by valuing knowledge as contextual (Kvale, 1996). If this was the case, validity, reliability and generalisability could be re-conceptualised to apply to specific local, personal and community forms of truth with a focus on daily life and local narrative (Kvale, 1996).

Acknowledging that there can be no one correct interpretation of the data on which this thesis is based does not preclude evaluation of its quality and rigour. Herschell (1999: 2) proposes that 'process believability' premised on a set of principles to which the researcher should adhere, from a declaration of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions to critical discussion of all aspects of the study, may provide a means by which such evaluation could be conducted. Alternatively Lieblich et al (1998) propose four criteria against which to evaluate narrative research: width or comprehensiveness, coherence, insightfulness, and parsimony or the ability to provide an analysis based on a small number of concepts. Many other suggestions can be found in the literature. However the reader chooses to evaluate this thesis,

I have endeavoured to ensure that it is “thorough, careful, honest and accurate (as distinct from true or correct)” (Mason, 1996) and I hope that it will be considered to be honest, reliable, rigorous and professional (Blaxter et al, 1996)

Conclusion and Prelude

This thesis could be conceived as a series of chapters each with a particular story to tell. The theoretical chapters represent the macro-story, which is brought to life by field-based stories. This chapter has related the story of a research journey which has been constructed not only in terms of providing a description of how the research was carried out but also as a reflexive autobiographical account aimed at making transparent my assumptions that have influenced the research at all stages. I have sought to justify my research approach at all levels from my choice of ethnography to the decision to conduct an analysis of narratives and a configurative narrative analysis.

The four narratives constructed from the students' stories form the basis of the data chapters that follow: tensions and uncertainties in OT education, stability and change, virtuous therapists and becoming a professional person. These narratives are themselves synthesised by a plot, that is the progress towards becoming a professional person. However, as textual products they are not only written in different ways, but they also reflect different types of analysis based on paradigmatic and storied knowing. Chapters 4 and 7, the first and final data chapters, are consistent with the majority of qualitative writing based on paradigmatic analysis. They use short illustrative passages selected from many transcripts to show how the analysis holds across accounts.

Chapter 5 adopts this approach in the main but also includes a brief ‘story’ featuring the student Lisa. The story is a synthesis of data about Lisa drawn from all of her transcripts to create a snapshot of her development. The story is used as a means of critiquing the preceding analysis and no attempts have been made to broaden this analysis across accounts. Chapter 6 relies totally on this approach to constructing a story around a ‘plot’ of professional caring and the impact it had on Carol and Dan. Longer excerpts have been selected from interview transcripts, arguably allowing the reader to gain a holistic impression of each of the two students and their experiences, which is less feasible when working across the sample, as was the case in chapters 4 and 7. Despite the implications of turning ‘persons into portraits’, which have already been discussed, I argue that the two approaches to analysis are complimentary and have been combined to ensure breadth and depth of understanding.

As Duncan (2000: 461) maintains “the overriding concern of the committed ethnographer is to convey the complexity and interrelatedness of social life in ways which offer new or differently interpreted explanations of its behaviour” I hope that in reading the following chapters there will be something new and different to be learned about the process of professional socialisation and that it will become evident that I ‘have been there’ (Van Maanen, 1988). However, one task remains and that is to introduce the reader to the twelve students who gave many hours of their time in trying to make sense of the professionalising processes that they were undergoing.

Narrative research with its emphasis on the individual has been deemed to be much more personal than other types of qualitative approach (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995) In contrast to research based on conventional qualitative methods, where participants may not even recognise themselves in the text because the data have been so fragmented, a narrative approach increases the likelihood of research participants and those who know them recognising themselves within texts (Chase, 1996) Even though pseudonyms and other forms of disguise have been used throughout the thesis it is my belief that the use of individuals' stories renders participants more vulnerable than conventional methods

On the basis of this vulnerability I have opted not to introduce the twelve students who participated in interviews in a more conventional way, for instance, by giving some insight into their biographies Instead, two direct quotes have been selected for each student as a means of saying something about each of them I leave it to the reader to envisage what sorts of selves are created and revealed through these self-narratives

The Students

Lisa	I went in [to fieldwork placement] having decided how I was going to be I couldn't be me I'm conventional in that my principle medium is crafts for therapy which is very OT but in every other sense I see myself as not conventional
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Jo I don't know whether I feel like an OT
Not really
I feel like an observer looking in
trying to get in

Talking's difficult when I'm on show

Leanne Well instead of seeing things either one way or another
It's less easy now because
I think about the what ifs, the maybes
I'm less decisive

If someone gave me something [practical] to do
I could do it far better than if they said 'write a 3,000 word essay'

Ellie I use the drive to and from college
to change my persona
I leave college thinking about student things
and by the time I've got home
I'm thinking about what's for tea

I've got this huge support network around me

Mike I'd like to go back to working with learning disabilities
A very disempowered group
They've got me

Well I've been full of indignation like you are
like your going to change the world
But now
I realise there are no easy answers to the problems [in society]

Janet

Oh, I'll just smile and say I'm fine
even when I'm not

Being a Christian
I've got very definite views
on what's right and wrong

Amy

I've always had a bit of a nightmare with my sister
All through school, I had
'Judith can do that
why can't you?

I found a lady lying on the floor
She looked like she was dead
Sometimes when people are asleep they look dead
It scared me

Dan

I don't see me as an OT
and someone else as a nurse and someone as a social worker
We all have aims and we all work together
we can all contribute

We're a very close family
we do a lot for each other

Kate

I'm a friendly chatty sort of person
no time to mess around getting to know people
I'm straight in
mind it can be classed as nosy

I loved chatting to patients
being with them
I'm happy with that side of things
it's the academic side I have my doubts about
it doesn't come easily

Carol

Feeling that I've nearly made it [to qualification] is like
a bit like a new car
It's something that you've really wanted
then when you get it
it's a bit tentative
because you're trying it out

I've realised I suppose
if you want to do something badly enough
you can do it
How well you do it is up to you

Paula

I wanted to roll up my sleeves and get stuck into [working as an
OT]

But obviously you can't do that
The course is a stepping stone
something I have to do

I can't shake off the student role
You know that you're being assessed
so you're not yourself
not relaxed

Simon

No planning, no preparation
I'm very much a go for it person
It's head down and charge

There's nothing like going in
full of confidence
and falling flat on your face [laughs]
The problem is I keep doing it

Chapter 4

Tensions and Uncertainties in Becoming an OT: “The Medium *is* the Message”

Tensions and Uncertainties in Becoming an OT: “The Medium is the Message” (Barnett, 1994)

Introduction

The brief account in chapter 2 of the nature and philosophy underpinning occupational therapy and occupational therapy education should have provided the reader with some insight into the general and local contexts of professional socialisation in contemporary OT practice. The aim of this chapter is to further develop an understanding of the local context of the research, particularly in terms of the pedagogical approach adopted within the course at the centre of the study and to focus on its impact on students’ professional socialisation.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of the educational programme as a dynamic for effectively socialising students into a profession (Howkins & Ewens, 1999, Fitzpatrick et al, 1996). Whether certain programmes are more influential than others, in terms of such a broad outcome, is less certain. Data from nursing courses in two Australian universities each with very different educational programmes, one traditional and didactic in its approach, the other student-centred, seems to indicate that the pedagogy of the course is less important where there is a strong sense of working towards becoming a professional person (Du Toit, 1995). However, there is some indication in these studies that there is a need to problematise the notion of ‘effective socialisation’ and to question the assumptions embedded in it prior to considering how it may be facilitated.

In chapter 1 I established my own position on professional socialisation suggesting that it is a socially constructed process, which is far more complex than the induction of passive students into a role. What I hope to illustrate in this chapter is how the pedagogy adopted within the OT course had a fundamental influence on the students, in terms of how they came to view the OT profession and how they saw themselves fitting into it. Exposed to a series of discourses impacting on identification processes which precede identity (Pitt, 1997), the students found themselves presented with alternative ways of knowing OT, not something they had expected.

Uncertainty, doubt and insecurity became evident during the first year of the course forming a common narrative around which the chapter revolves. For instance, Ellie reflects

I read about OT and thought 'this is me' I identified with the philosophy. Straight away when I read about it, it seemed to ring bells. It's the holistic approach. I like the idea that people are greater than the sum of the parts. I liked its diversity. But there seems to be some conflict now I've got to university. Some of the lectures talk about conflicting ideas. Sometimes you feel it. [Ellie]

Ellie described how she came to identify with OT as an occupation into which she could envisage herself fitting. However, like several other students she also hinted at how greater insight into OT since joining the course had challenged initial conceptions, creating tensions and uncertainties, problems and dilemmas which were frequently a feature of interview conversations.

My intention is to discuss this narrative of uncertainty, which reflects the dilemmas that students faced in terms of positioning themselves in relation to

alternative discourses within OT, as a series of binaries because to some of the students this was initially how they were perceived, as either/or choices influencing each student's sense of professional identity. However, although I represent them as being in polar opposition partially for heuristic purposes, as such they do not do justice to the students' developing 'ways of knowing' (Baxter Magolda, 1992).

Extending earlier research on intellectual development (Perry, 1970), Baxter Magolda (1992) identifies four ways of knowing of increasing complexity. In brief, at the most basic level of 'absolute knowing', knowledge is viewed as certain by students therefore decision-making is a matter of either/or choices. However, as intellectual development advances through the stages of 'transitional', 'independent' and 'contextual knowing' the nature of knowledge becomes increasingly uncertain making either/or choices less and less appropriate. Whereas it is recognised that some students will never move far from being 'absolute knowers', several of the OT students had already begun to resolve some of the possible dichotomies, which revealed themselves in the various dimensions of OT practice.

Using William Doll's (1993) vision of a postmodern curriculum I will argue that exposure to uncertainty and choice, although initially uncomfortable, prepared the students for practice in an uncertain and ever changing world. The curriculum according to Doll (1993: 176) should be underpinned by the "four Rs" richness, recursion, relations and rigour. Briefly, Doll (1993: 176) suggests that *richness* gives a curriculum depth, allowing for "layers of meaning" multiple possibilities

or interpretations the right amount of indeterminacy” which is developed through interaction. As a means of developing competence Doll recommends *recursion* or reflecting on one’s work and the importance of *relations* which refers to both making connections within a curriculum’s structure and attending to connections with others, which is a dramatic departure from individualistic ideology. Finally, as an antidote to relativism, he suggests a need for *rigour* involving a conscious attempt to expose assumptions inherent in any interpretation.

Tensions Between Theory and Practice

Possibly one of the most obvious binaries identified by students within a vocationally orientated course is that of theory and practice. Squires (1987) suggests that the contentious nature of the relationship between theory and practice is one of the defining characteristics of a professional course, which Caul (1993) attributes to joint validation by professional bodies and higher education institutions. Aside from theory and practice being identified with two very different learning contexts, tensions are complex in that they rest on debates about what counts as knowledge. Most evident were tensions between scientific and social knowledge and experiential and formal knowledge, which for beginning OT students, at times, proved to be perplexing.

Scientific and Social Knowledge

I felt reasonably well prepared knowledge-wise, I’d done a fair amount of reading but when I went onto placement it wasn’t an issue really as we were looking at the problems rather than the underlying causes. He [fieldwork educator] told me that I was too clinically

minded, that I was just seeing the pathology and that I needed to consider the practical and social aspects more [Jo]

This extract is drawn from a conversation about Jo's first fieldwork placement where he found his knowledge of the biological sciences to have less validity than practical and social knowledge, of which he had little at the time. It may be argued that the practitioner with whom Jo had come into contact typifies the common-sense approach in the 'real' world of practice where foundational knowledge in the basic sciences becomes more remote and possibly even threatening (Usher et al, 1997). However, the perceived importance of a scientific underpinning to OT practice was highlighted by the expectations of other practitioners and by medical colleagues through the experiences of two other students who both felt that a poor scientific knowledge base inhibited their ability to perform on fieldwork placement.

I was there with students from two other schools [of OT] and by comparison I felt I had no knowledge of anatomy or physiology. My educator was quite critical. I don't know if I said that I was worried about it but I walked in on a physical placement where I knew nothing about the body. I did feel I had the interpersonal skills, talking with patients, mixing with them, being sensitive to their needs and working in a team, which was quite hard work. We've concentrated on the social side of things but at the end of the day that's not going to get me a pass, well, it is but I need basic knowledge to be good at the job. I'd rather have had the knowledge than having awkward conversations where I had to say 'I don't know'. Most of us are able, we are aware of the social side of things. Studying interpersonal skills has probably helped us all a bit but it's something that we could do as a sideline rather than taking six hours a week [Amy]

The second half of my placement involved doing some orthotics and that really showed my lack of anatomy. That's the one thing about this course we haven't got it at our fingertips and that's awkward when you are presented with people. I avoided going to some hand clinics because I was so embarrassed, the first time I went the consultant asked me something and I couldn't tell him, I didn't know. I do think it's important but because everything is so crammed in it's low priority [Carol]

Despite a stated commitment to the biological and medical sciences, the balance between a scientific and social orientation within the course was clearly a contentious issue, which had led to the perception among students that inadequate attention had been given to the sciences Usher et al (1997) offer a possible explanation as to why the sciences are considered to provide the universal foundations of practice.

Scientific disciplines such as anatomy and biochemistry are seen as having a foundational relationship to practice because they seem to provide descriptions and explanations which are secure, reliable and applicable to any situation and upon which it would seem eminently reasonable for practice to be based
(Usher et al, 1997 68)

It is not surprising that students, as 'products' of educational systems, that have encouraged objectivity and the notion of a unifying truth, should continue to crave certainty in their learning and that they believe that a scientific framework can offer this security However, when others in the practicum insist on testing this knowledge its importance is further emphasised illustrating how professional knowledge is socially constructed Furthermore, the medical orientation of OT is reinforced by the term 'professions allied to medicine', in which OT is included This label places OT in a framework of medical knowledge, not only giving it credence but also creating certain expectations, as both Amy and Carol's stories illustrate

In fact, the WFOT (1998) standards state that one sixth of all courses should be devoted to basic sciences, the importance of which may have been enhanced by the move into higher education (Hugman, 1991) According to Reese (1987) OTs place a high priority on the sciences in areas such as anatomy and physiology

indicating that despite being rooted in an anti-scientific critique of medicine (Hugman, 1991) and a commitment to social models of healthcare (Wilcock, 1998), OT maintains its connections with a scientific base

An analysis of course documentation for the course at the centre of this study suggests that a scientific discourse is paralleled by other discourses which are afforded equal attention, possibly as a result of changed professional priorities since the mid-1980s. However, the substantial attention devoted to social science aspects of the curriculum was deemed by Amy to be too great. Seeing herself as scientifically oriented, Amy would have gladly spent more time 'learning' pathology and envisaged herself eventually working in a physical setting where she saw practice as more clearly defined. Conversely, other students immersed themselves in the social science aspects of the programme, as Lisa's comments illustrate

My educator was interested in the Kielhofner model and social systems theory, which no one had mentioned before. It seemed like a good way of doing things – it really inspired me. He [educator] also used cognitive behavioural therapy so it was good to see that in use [Lisa]

Initially, the students seemed to fall into one of two camps. There were those who were more interested in practice based on formal scientific rational knowledge who usually expressed a preference for the physical aspect of OT practice. Conversely, some students like Lisa, who saw herself eventually working in mental health, identified more closely with social aspects of the curriculum. Because OT practice is so diverse it can accommodate students with very disparate notions of practice. Obviously in some cases the students altered their

thinking, becoming less polarised in their views, especially after exposure to diverse areas of practice. However, it could be argued that their initial commitments indicate a need for students to identify an ethos into which they felt they could fit and in which they felt secure.

Formal Knowledge and Experiential Learning

Another source of tension evident in the relationship between theory and practice was the perceived difference between experiential and formal knowledge and the value that students accorded to each depending on context. For example, Ellie comments:

You never believe that you'll be able to do it. You sit in university and you're so divorced from reality, you learn the theory and all the time you're wondering, 'Am I going to be able to do it when I get out there? Will I be able to pull all of this theory together and do the job?'
[Ellie]

Ellie's worries about relating theory to practice suggest that the OT course furnishes students with formal theoretical knowledge in which they should locate the meaning of subsequent experiences. In fact, this is not entirely the case, as I will discuss presently. Nevertheless, typical of most professional courses, the OT course aims to provide a foundational knowledge base within the university sufficient to enable students to go out into their fieldwork and make best use of the fieldwork experience. However, as I have shown, students' perceptions of course content, particularly in terms of scientific knowledge, suggest they feel the emphasis on formal knowledge is inadequate.

These feelings of inadequacy are very real and hardly surprising if it is this knowledge that other people insist on testing. In addition, I questioned whether

course structure might be contributing to students' perceptions of a lack of preparedness in terms of formal scientific knowledge. The OT course is modularised in accordance with the modular framework introduced across the entire university. Modular programmes have been deemed to offer

student choice, learner autonomy, flexibility for individual student circumstances, adaptability to new modes of learning and assessment, speed of response to external pressures and agencies, openness to new kinds of knowledge and new connections
(Walker, 1994: 24)

However, the compartmentalisation and fragmentation of knowledge (Jarvis, 1993), which according to Slattery (1995) is a feature of the modern curriculum, has been accused of compromising the total experience of higher education (Squires, 1987). With particular relevance to the OT course, Jonathan (1987) highlights arguments posed by the scientific disciplines against modularisation, arguing that understanding is frequently either pre-empted or foreclosed by modular systems. Yet, interestingly the OT students were ambivalent about the modular structure. They did not see it as interfering with their learning, probably because they were already familiar with it through A levels, NVQs and GNVQs, which are frequently delivered through a modular framework in schools and colleges (Walker, 1994).

My attention turned to the ways in which the course was delivered. Much of the course utilised less traditional teaching methods instead favouring interactive and experiential learning. Traditional lectures, according to course documentation, were used in conjunction with active learning strategies such as seminars and practical workshops, which were key features of course design. The latter approaches to teaching acknowledge experience as a resource for learning and

place value on life experiences, work roles and previously acquired intellectual skills. In a context where informal experiential knowledge is deemed to be highly relevant it is possible to see how students may feel that the emphasis on formal knowledge is inadequate.

Students confirmed the generally interactive and experiential nature of the approach to teaching and learning. For example, sessions exploring issues likely to arise in practice, in the safety of the classroom and in the company of peers was deemed by students to have been particularly useful, although Jo maintained that “most people hated” the use of scenarios and role play. Several students talked about the level one module called ‘Interactive Processes’ as having been influential in helping identify personal strengths and weaknesses through the use of experiential learning techniques or ‘non-directive methods’ (Robbins, 1988

24). Carol recalled her dislike of these sessions but also recognised their worth:

I hated [Interactive Processes]. I really disliked it when I was going through it. We had a brilliant group, a really cohesive group but the reason I didn't like it was probably because you see shortcomings in yourself. Afterwards I thought about it more and I could see the reasoning behind it. It raised issues and probably I disliked it because it was a bit painful to look at yourself. Now I can say that I think it was probably quite helpful.

[Carol]

The use of experiential strategies challenges research that suggests, despite fundamental changes over the past decade in higher education in the UK, pedagogical practices have exhibited a resistance to change (Barnett & Hallam (1999)). It is possible that the varied and flexible approach to teaching in this course may have been attributable to the relatively young course team and to their shared origins as practising OTs prior to moving into careers as lecturers.

Although students had met lecturers keen to reinforce the traditional teacher-learner relationship through the adoption of a didactic approach (Errington, 2000), these staff were certainly in a minority

As “virtually a dominant discourse” in adult educational theory and practice (Usher & Edwards, 1994 197) it seems hardly surprising that experiential learning should feature strongly in such a vocationally oriented course. Nevertheless, it was not quite what several of the students had expected especially in the university-based components of the course. In contrast, time spent in the practicum constitutes a specific type of experiential learning accrued through immersion in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This was a process with which students were comfortable, because even though challenging, it fit with their expectations. At a practical level such exposure to OT practice is considered to be an essential component of professional socialisation (WFOT, 1998). However, it also accords value to learning, which is less formally structured and is an acknowledgement of knowledge as relative and socially constructed (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Again, in the practicum some fieldwork educators with whom the students met interpreted their role in the provision of “appropriate teaching, guidance and support” (as set out in the 1995 Bsc Honours Degree in Occupational Therapy Course Document, page 44) very narrowly, for example, having to teach the student in an apprenticeship-like relationship as Amy suggests

Simon [her educator] had had students before so he knew what he was doing. I never went anywhere without him and I actually did a lot of observing. He even decided whom I should focus on for my case study [Amy]

On the other hand, as Carol's experience indicates, other fieldwork educators saw themselves more as facilitators with the task of exposing OT students to new experiences

I feel I've learned a lot. It was her [fieldwork educator] way really. There wasn't a lot I could prepare for. Well I knew how the kidneys worked and I could have done some reading on the implications of diabetes, vascular problems and what can happen. But I think she felt that it's better to just get in there and work and go out with people, spend time with people to get the idea of what's going on.
[Carol]

The approach adopted by Carol's educator would be applauded by Caul (1993: 71) who also puts formal theoretical knowledge in perspective by suggesting "students gain immensely by being confronted with practical problem-solving which requires a selective use of their theoretical knowledge"

That experiential learning is not a neutral way of constructing knowledge is widely acknowledged. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993) argue that the construction of experience in the workplace as transparent and providing unmediated access to the world is rooted in a rational/positivistic epistemology. Similarly, Usher and Edwards (1994) challenge learning through experience as a progressive and emancipatory movement by stressing that the meaning of an experience is interpreted through a system of signifying structures and processes within which the individual exists.

Notwithstanding these critiques, the commitment to experiential learning within the OT course at the centre of this study is evident in the strategies employed which demonstrate an acceptance that all knowledge is open to construction and reconstruction and that diversity should be recognised and valued (Usher &

Edwards, 1994) For instance, considerable time was devoted to encouraging reflection or recursion (Doll, 1993) through keeping a reflective diary, which can facilitate recognition of alternative interpretations of events Not all of the students engaged willingly with diary writing as Janet indicated, saying, “I didn’t like the diary I didn’t like committing things to paper, putting personal things me, down on paper I did it all in pencil” [Janet] Less circumspect, Dan expressed no such concerns

I will continue my diary on placement It’ll be interesting to keep referring back Some of the lecturers have said ‘you don’t realise what skills you’ve gained’ because I suppose it becomes so natural to you It would be good to look back to something you’d done and think well I’d do it differently now [Dan]

Dan did keep the diary as he had planned and he also found himself re-visiting entries made early on in his fieldwork placements and with the benefit of more experience was able to see some of the problem situations he had noted in new ways

Such reconstruction was also actively encouraged in a mandatory Year 2 module, which focused on critically evaluating diary entries made while on fieldwork placement Sharing their unique experiences of practice within a clinical colloquium offered students the opportunity for dialogical reflection, which has been deemed to be a more powerful way of broadening perspectives (Clouder, 2000) but also allows “the cultivation of difference in the diverse interpretations of the lifeworlds that people articulate” (Usher & Edwards, 1994 197) It is within this sort of forum that diversity is recognised

In addition, at a more general level, diversity is promoted through the fieldwork education component of the course as students are placed in a wide variety of health care and community environments. Initially, perceived differences in experience created uncertainty and feelings of vulnerability in students who inevitably wanted to compare their progress with that of their peers. However, these feelings generally subsided on the recognition that each had unique experiences, which were not comparable. Carol reflects:

I think everyone's going to leave the course different. How everyone has perceived what they have been taught will be different and we've all had different experiences. I could stand up and someone else could stand up and speak about something and it would be totally different. [Carol]

The use of the above strategies for the promotion of reflection and for the acknowledging and valuing diversity demonstrates a commitment to the experiential aspect of learning to become a professional person. However, at a more fundamental level, experiential knowledge arguably could be privileged at the level of course design. The first fieldwork placement occurs in the final six weeks of Year 1 of the course when clearly students have a very limited knowledge base with which to work. Despite recognition that students need some basic understandings at this stage, there is no attempt to furnish students with exhaustive theoretical knowledge through which experience would be interpreted. To some critics it may seem that students are being sent out ill-equipped to maximise their learning and certainly, as I have illustrated, adequate preparation is a contentious issue among students and indeed among some staff. Nevertheless, a commitment to early exposure to practice does illustrate the

disposition of the OT subject group towards experience, which can assert primacy over rational, formal knowledge

I am not suggesting that lecturers and fieldwork educators do not place a great deal of importance on rational knowledge, rather that within the course at the centre of this study there existed a commitment to learning which is less predictable and less prescribed. Kielhofner (1997: 4) suggests that “[therapists] share a similar philosophical orientation that emphasizes respect for the unique desires and abilities of the individual” I argue that this philosophy extends into the attitudes of OTs to the education of students and underpins a curriculum built on acknowledging the rich diversity of experience

This possibly explains why some of the students never did find their ‘academic’ selves, to the extent that Ellie, even after qualifying with a first class degree, did not see herself as ‘academic’. Whereas it has been argued that the privileging of theoretical studies in professional education inculcates rigour, and yet may leave practitioners feeling that they have not learnt anything relevant to practice (Usher et al, 1997), in this study it seems that practice knowledge has been privileged. This is not to suggest that formal knowledge has been de-valued but in the adoption of a problem-solving model it is given equal status and utilised alongside other sources of knowledge, including that of the client

Competence: Technical Rationality or Reflective Capabilities

Students found themselves faced with alternative ways of defining competence in professional practice. The acquisition of both higher order cognitive and professional /technical core skills are identified as key aims of the course which are reflected in course design. The course aims to promote 'fitness for practice', in order to meet required standards for state registration, 'fitness for academic award' in terms of meeting the required standards for the award of a Bsc Degree with Honours, and 'fitness for purpose' (in employment terms) or capability on graduation (1995 Bsc Honours Degree in Occupational Therapy Course Document, page 4)

'Fitness for purpose' is now a common term, derived from the manufacturing industry as a functional definition of quality, which raises questions about whose purpose and how fitness should be assessed (Harvey & Green, 1993). In a professional educational context these are issues of concern, not only to higher education institutions, but other stakeholders such as professional bodies, service-providers and not least the students themselves, who are increasingly being considered to be customers. Following her first fieldwork placement Carol reflected

I need to know an awful lot more about applying the theory and about measuring things, outcomes evaluation. I think it's now just building skills – skills that I need to keep learning and things that I know I haven't done on a practical basis [Carol]

Carol, like several of her fellow students, interprets 'fitness' in terms of having the skills to do the job, a perception consistent with the product model approach to 'training' where outcomes can be readily measured in terms of competencies

(Cross, 1995) Technical knowledge and skills provide the basis for occupational authority therefore it is not surprising that students consider the acquisition of these skills to be a priority Furthermore, as Barnett (2000 90) argues, “narrowly focused skills are passé, instead what are now required are transferable skills, core skills, key skills we are in the presence of a skills-oriented conception of work” in which competence now covers a broad range of capabilities

Students must therefore endeavour to become ‘competent’ selves rather than acquiring a set of competencies Carol recognised that although acquiring appropriate skills was important there were other more fundamental changes involved in becoming an OT, which fall more within a process model approach This involves the fostering of a deeper and more holistic educational process deemed to prepare students for the complexity of professional practice (Fish, 1991) Fitness for purpose within this approach is more difficult to assess and quantify

Increasingly, professional courses such as social work (Ryan et al, 1995, Dominelli, 1996) have been pressurised by service-providers to adopt a product model or competency approach to professional education founded in technical rationality (Fish, 1995) Schon (1987) conceives of technical rationality as the “applying of theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge” to instrumental problems Schon (1987) suggests that professional schools within universities are premised on technical rationality and that the normative curriculum comprises relevant basic science, followed by relevant applied science and finally a practicum Not only is formal rational knowledge

privileged over other forms of knowledge in a technical rational world but technical expertise is all and visible performance is vital

Similarly, Edwards (1998: 27) points out that “competent practice is based on performance and the knowledge necessary to or underpinning that particular performance. In other words, the only knowledge necessary for competent practice is that which is immediately ‘useful’”. Professional activity can be mastered and efficiency is paramount within the ideology of competency, which Barnett (1994: 15-16) terms ‘operationalism’, under the premise of which “terms such as insight, understanding, reflection, wisdom and critique are neglected in favour of skill, competence, outcome, information, technique and flexibility”. However, Edwards and Usher (1996) in considering Schon’s position in relation to working practices maintain

In an era of flexibility and multi-skilling, predictable and standardized working practices are being undermined and, with that, the rationale for technical rationality as a way of structuring and organizing knowledge
(Edwards & Usher, 1996: 222)

The OT course seemed to have avoided being drawn into a competency approach *per se* although it did have a commitment to the promotion of enterprise skills as part of the Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative and therefore could be said to be promoting operationalism under this guise. Nevertheless, I argue that Schon’s well known use of the analogy of the swampy lowlands as representing the challenge of professional practice highlights the inadequacy of technical rational grounding for OT practice in which “messy, confusing problems defy technical resolution” (Schon, 1987: 3). Alsop & Ryan (1996: 14-15) highlight how OT has distanced itself from the technical rational model where “the

emphasis was on doing and on perfecting skills through observation, trial and error and rehearsal”, towards a professional artistry approach embracing uncertainty and encouraging deliberation and reflection (Fish, 1995)

This more reflective approach was evident in the perceptions of OT students, who despite being very much aware of the need to be seen to be performing and of the need to master certain skills, showed insight and understanding of the demands of practice extending far beyond technical mastery. For instance, Janet says, “I think differently

It’s going through the process that’s important. I think if you didn’t appreciate the process and what you get from going through it you’d go mad. I think I was already quite a reflective person, but it creeps into every aspect of your life which is frightening really. It’s so subtle.

Janet is describing a reflective self that in her case had already been established prior to the course. Other students referred frequently to the development of their reflective capabilities which the course has aimed to nurture not only by encouraging students to keep reflective diaries, as already mentioned, but through the concept of student ‘profiling’ adopted within the curriculum as a reflective tool.

A profile is “a document that records a student’s achievements or outlines what needs to be achieved” (Council for National Academic Awards & Department of Employment, 1992: 5). In other words, the profile can provide a framework for learning, teaching and assessment by outlining student objectives and activities to be undertaken as well as recording achievements. However, it is important that the ‘benefits’ of profiles for students are kept in perspective. They constitute

another aspect of monitoring in the guise of a student-centred tool. In fact, Usher et al (1997: 78) cite profiling, in addition to appraisal, assessment and evaluation procedures, as surveillance mechanisms becoming “ever more pervasive and intrusive yet without appearing to be oppressive”. In the context of the course in my study, the profiling system has three components comprising a formative personal profile for use within university study blocks and two summative professional practice components (see Appendix 4 – Personal Profile Documentation). It therefore provides both a means of assessing student performance and a learning tool for students.

Aside from notions of regulatory power, profiling can be seen as a way of facilitating reflective capabilities and the ability to set personal goals. Reactions to the notion of profiling were, as may be expected, varied. Echoing Janet’s comments about written reflection in diary format, several students felt uneasy with the formality of the system possibly either because it was experienced as oppressive or because they were able to build their own critique. For example, Lisa reflected:

I think I’m that sort of person [reflective] anyhow. The professional profiles that we have to do. I’ve always found really difficult although I have to admit the most recent one was easier. But I have to be introspective on my own terms and I find it can be very prescriptive – the way it’s done from one point of view. It doesn’t necessarily fit in with my schema but I think it’s probably a good thing to do.

Students take ownership of profiling documents and are responsible for the process although they are each assigned a professional development supervisor with whom they are expected to liaise. However, the success of the system was

variable Janet suggested that she was able to get by without much input from her professional development supervisor and that for the system to really work, in order to provide support for students who needed it, a much closer relationship would need to be established. Nevertheless, in principle the students acknowledged the capacity of a personal profiling system to provide a learner support mechanism and a framework for achieving coherence which is well supported in the literature (Jenkins et al, 1994, Walker, 1994). At a practical level it was “another thing to think about” and “always seemed to have to be completed when there were lots of other things to do” [Janet]. In terms of encouraging reflection it was deemed helpful by some students in goal-setting or identifying progress.

Lisa’s comment about being introspective in her own terms should serve to remind educators attempting to encourage reflection that it can be both conceptualised and facilitated in different ways. Written reflection can be equated with reflection-on-action whereas practitioners also engage in the more dynamic process of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1987), the practicum providing the ideal context in which to develop these capabilities. However, according to Jenkins and Brotherton (1995: 280), professional effectiveness is not dependent on reflection-on and in-action but hinges on immersion in a ‘community of practice’. In the practice context, “learning is situated, ongoing and continuous and occurs in action, in discussion and in periods of personal reflection, purposively and incidentally” (Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995: 280). In fact, the OT students learned that immersion in professional practice was to demand of them

in terms of both technical know-how and reflective capabilities and that becoming an OT involved achieving a balance of both approaches

Autonomy and Relational Selves

Relative levels of independence and interdependence created yet another tension for several of the OT students. The profile of students gaining admission to the OT course shows that a significant proportion is mature. Often these students have had considerable experience of the educational process prior to joining the course. Janet, for instance, had accumulated a number of qualifications after leaving school

I've always been a student. It's normal for me to be at the computer. I completed a number of word-processing qualifications, then I did business administration part-time. Then I decided to do something really daring for me. I did my Maths GCSE. After that I gave up my job at the lab to do an Access to Health course and now I'm here
[Janet]

Ellie had chosen to do an Open University degree "because it was the only way [she] could get to do a degree. I did it. finished it last Christmas but it was hard, especially feeling that you're on your own a lot of the time"

Both Janet and Ellie illustrate how students come to the course with a wealth of prior experience on which to draw. They have learned that motivation reaps rewards in terms of qualifications and typify self-directing, rational subjects. It is therefore not surprising that, like most of the students in this study, they readily accepted and responded to the requirement to engage in self-directed learning. Carol says with confidence, "If I meet something new that I know nothing about I have the ability to go and find out"

Carol, as a self-sufficient and self-directing individual may be symbolic of the empowering capacity of the course, or certainly of previous courses in which she engaged. However, the goal of autonomy reflects assumptions about the role of education typical, according to Usher and Edwards (1994), of most educational practice. In the context of professional education such a goal may be considered fitting to the way in which professional practice is conceptualised in that autonomy and superordinacy reflect a discourse of dominant and subordinate relationships, which some professions may not see within their interests to challenge. This, I argue, is not altogether true of OT in which 'democratic professionalism' (Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995: 335) favours partnerships and participation of both professional and client who work together to overcome problems.

Yet powerful discourses are pervasive as the course documentation illustrates. The ability to be self-directed is equated with achievement of autonomy, which is deemed to be a necessary characteristic of the practitioner. However, despite students' past experiences, which indicate that they are capable of being autonomous learners, students' stories challenge autonomy as an educational goal. For instance, self-direction was not necessarily interpreted as studying alone by the students and many of them worked collectively towards assignments. Carol went on to talk about the students with whom she shared a house saying "we get our heads down together. If I find a good article that I know would be useful to someone I'll copy it and they do the same for me."

Several of the students expressed satisfaction at helping each other through the course, although working in collectives was not without its problems. For instance, Amy related an incident when her group of students were let down by a group member who had not done her share of the work necessary to complete an assignment. Tensions between autonomy and relationality are further illustrated by two of the older students on the course who found themselves in supportive roles with younger students. Janet explained:

I've got one particular friend on the course – we've actually got very little in common but I suppose she latched on to me. I think I'm her agony aunt, she relies on me. I quite like to have my own space. I like to spend my own time doing my own thing. Don't get me wrong, I like to have friends but she leads me astray. Sometimes I can be quite assertive and say 'no' and other times I think 'Oh well'.

Simon, expressed a similar ambivalence towards being sent away on fieldwork placement with another student:

There's another student with me on placement, so there are two of us. I would actually prefer to be on my own but they have a lot of students so it will be a real mix of people and ideas. She's worried about the placement so I may be the calming influence. I don't mind that really – it may be that's why we've got the placement together.

Both Janet and Simon were clearly capable of relying on their own resources but had been drawn into supportive relationships by chance or by design and had experienced feelings of obligation towards younger students. They had in effect taken on a parenting role by virtue of their age, which is probably not an infrequent occurrence on a course with such a wide age range. However, this concern for peers possibly also reflects the relational inclination of OT students.

Research suggests that students attracted to OT frequently show a concern for and express a desire to help others (Rozier et al, 1992, Danko, 1993), a

characteristic which is explored in greater depth in chapter 6. Although these altruistic tendencies are generally associated with clients, they may equally apply to peers. Furthermore, the WFOT (1998) standards for the education of OTs stress the relational nature of OT, indicating that relational selves constitute an important aspect of practice and of professional identity.

Success in treatment depends largely on the individual and group relationships involved, and the effort which each patient can be encouraged to make towards his/her own recovery
(WFOT, 1998: 11)

This emphasis on relationality, which represents a dramatic departure from individualistic ideology (Doll, 1993), is reflected in the course prospectus and course documentation and is translated into practice, for example, through an emphasis on interpersonal skills, counselling skills and through group work. Such an emphasis on the self in relation to others contradicts the discourse of autonomy and independence with which clearly some students did identify, creating tensions in some instances. However, individualism and competition did appear to be less prominent among the OT students contradicting research, which suggests that contemporary education is characterised by individual competition (Kvale, 1995).

Having considered the tensions between autonomy and relational selves in an intra-disciplinary sense, it is interesting to consider how these same students responded to colleagues from other disciplines. The stated rationale for modularisation is to enable “professional and vocational areas to meet emerging professional needs, particularly in inter-disciplinary contexts and for professional up-dating” (1992/1993 -1995/1996 University Strategic Plan, page 4). Shared

learning is deemed to facilitate an understanding of related professions with whom OTs interact in practice and as such has been written into the course philosophy and impacts on course design. To this effect, several core modules are labelled as 'shared teaching and learning' modules in which students are given the opportunity to engage with students on social work, physiotherapy and nursing courses.

The principle of shared learning may be seen as a way of enhancing the notion of inter-disciplinarity and of challenging boundaries created by the compartmentalisation of knowledge into disciplinary subject areas. However, interestingly, in practice shared learning met with considerable resistance from students who, when placed in a mixed group, expressed a preference for working with students from their own discipline. Amy comments:

In seminars, we all gravitate towards our own groups. We share the same outlook and we know each other. You get into a certain way of thinking. Just because we're in the same room as physios and nurses doesn't mean that you work with them.

Amy describes what may be interpreted as a strong sense of identification with her OT peers. Their reaction to students from other disciplines illustrates how their developing professional identity has marked the way in which they are the same as others who share that position and the ways in which they differed from those who do not (Woodward, 1997). It is not altogether surprising that students engage in boundary work which is after all not uncommon in professional life. Nevertheless, the tendency to self-segregate challenges the notion that student OTs are ready to respond to the demands of seeing themselves as part of a multidisciplinary team such as they will meet working in professional practice.

Insight into other professions is undoubtedly desirable early in professional education. However, I suggest that at this stage of professional life, students in the process of establishing a professional identity are likely to resist influences blurring this newly discovered and fragile sense of self. In this interdisciplinary context, relational selves operate selectively to increase group coherence and to identify those outside of the group.

Progress or personal transformation?

Self-perceived change has provided a focus for most of the interviews conducted over the three years of this study. Students have engaged in narratives of progress. I have framed my questions in terms of progress. Progress, or “change that fulfils certain pre-defined ends” (Usher et al, 1997: 12), is compelling and clearly both the students who participated in my research and myself have been shaped by discourses of mastery and rationality. Such discourses are pervasive and reflected in the expectations of professional courses.

Within the OT course the prospect of becoming a professional person rests on the student demonstrating ‘progress’ in cognitive, psychosocial, affective and ethical domains. The ‘bringing out’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994: 25), or growth of individuals, is facilitated through course structure and process which sees students working towards more complex ‘ways of knowing’ through each level of the course. There is a sense in which one thing follows on from another in a logical and ordered manner, lending itself well to textual representation in flow charts and tables. The route is prescribed and set down in words and diagrams that portray a one-way linear process.

Students like Carol read the signposts, which suggest that knowledge and competence are accumulative and promote personal and professional progress

One placement builds on another The first was psychological where people had problems with alcohol, drug related problems, some genuine chemical disturbances but the substance abuses carry through into rheumatology and orthopaedics Malfunctions carry through into physical effects like chronic pain I don't worry about going to do an initial interview now I don't even think about it, I suppose you start to develop tacit knowledge

[Carol]

Carol is the product of educational ideals that have had a profound influence on her personal expectations She expects logical progression and therefore interprets her experiences as progressive There is no question that the course will result in anything other than personal progress because this is its rational objective To fall short of this objective is to have failed which results in personal anxieties and public embarrassment of "falling behind" [Janet] At a practical level students may have been encouraged to see their "mistakes and errors as raw material" for learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990 178) rather than as set backs, but the contradictory and more fundamental message is one of uninterrupted progress as a gold standard

In a critique of developmental theory, Earwaker (1992 15) forwards an alternative perspective to the discourse of progress, which suggests that higher education should possibly come with a warning sign attached

The experience of higher education will exert a strong formative influence on the lives of most students, like parenthood and unemployment people experience these things differently Experiences do not come with their meanings written on their face, their meaning has to be constructed and they have the potential to develop and diminish the person

Earwaker's suggestion that professional development is more likely to be experienced as a series of steps, each prompted by a significant event rather than as a steady progression, resonates with the narrative of uncertainty and particularly with stories relating to critical incidents on fieldwork placement Janet, for instance, describes a developmental route characterised by 'fits and starts', sometimes feeling that she was going backwards, other times forwards, sometimes a professional self other times not

I've got confused feelings really I'm not sure I've learned a great deal from it [fieldwork placement] so I'm not sure whether I feel behind now or whether I'm still on a par with everyone else My confidence got lower and lower The confidence that I actually had developed, just went So I feel a bit dented at the minute

I flourished I was able to use my initiative, I didn't have anyone breathing over me It was a real confidence builder I couldn't really believe it Everything that they fed back to me They'd say 'you're doing really well with this' and I just couldn't believe it was me because I didn't feel I was necessarily putting in more effort

Janet illustrates how the process of becoming a professional person is steeped in emotion because developing selves are fragile and tenuous Lisa's metaphor for the course as a 'roller-coaster' belies the neat flow chart in the course document, which cannot hope to capture the ways in which students experience the highs and lows inherent in change The process is anything but predictable and linear reinforcing the notion that the curriculum should not be viewed as "a set, a priori, course to run, but as a passage of personal transformation" (Doll, 1993 4)

Development as depicted as a spiral or helix (Kegan, 1982) probably reflects the student experience with greater accuracy although its sentiment may be less well received by stakeholders such as service-providers, outside of academia As Usher et al (1997) suggest, it is difficult not to talk in terms of progress when

employed in an educational capacity and this is probably more so the case when involved in professional education. In OT, as in other healthcare professions, gaining a licence to practice as a professional person is contingent on satisfying certain minimum standards within a certain time-frame and this imposes constraints which it is impossible to disregard.

Learning to Live with Uncertainty

I began this chapter by suggesting that students experienced the course as open to multiple meanings and giving rise to multiple choices, which had been unexpected and in many instances challenging. Ellie's 'conflicting ideas' and the uncertainties expressed by other students formed a common narrative, which seemed to dominate the early stages of the professional socialisation process. This narrative has been conceptualised as a set of discourses, which I have presented as a series of binaries. Although this is how the discourses were initially experienced by some students, as either/or choices producing either/or selves, recognition of the complexity of OT practice soon meant that many of the binaries were resolved by seeing the discourses as interdependent. Garrick and Rhodes (1998) highlight how such interdependence is healthy as each binary threatens the hegemonic power of the other.

Leafing through the OT course document, I hear the uncertainties, the choices, the anxieties about what seems so certain in print, but then a need to create order from disorder permeates the contemporary world (Jeffcut, 1996). The course document, or 'fixed text' (Garrick & Rhodes, 1998: 178), could not represent knowledge and discourse as it was constructed and experienced in the complex

and changing world of healthcare practice, it could not possibly portray the rich complexity of the student experience

This prompts me to consider for whom the text is written. Its primary purpose must be to satisfy the professional body that the institution and the course will deliver an education that will “create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained” within the profession (Apple, 1990: 3). In addition, it sets out for service providers what to expect of the new graduate and therefore must appeal to contemporary agendas, such as the drive for competence and ‘fitness for purpose’. It must acknowledge the wishes of employers to specify their graduate labour force in terms of ‘uniformity and predictability’ (Barnett, 1994: 43). Finally, and not least, it must also reflect a process that gives rise to ‘graduateness’ in order to withstand academic scrutiny. Therefore it might be expected to make mention of self-direction, transferable skills and competence.

Like the students to whose education the course document refers, the document itself is constructed through a variety of discourses. The discourses emanate from popular conceptions of the purpose of education such as the production of certain disciplinary knowledge, instrumental rationality, predictability and control. In fact, Usher and Edwards (1994: 25) highlight how education “is allotted a key role in the forming and shaping of subjectivity and identity, the task of making people into particular kinds of subjects”. The subjects in the context of this study are professional people in the making. The task could be said to be narrowly defined as one of equipping them to join the work force, of engendering conformity, producing “docile bodies” and “obedient souls” (Foucault, 1979).

135), despite the pressure to conform being paradoxical in the light of the discourse of autonomy and superordination

This leads me to question the nature of the work for which students are being prepared and the context in which this document was written. Professions are becoming increasingly regulated, boundaries are being eroded and knowledges questioned (Bourner, Katz & Watson, 2000). The NHS is burdened with escalating demands on its resources, not least through the development of new technologies. The healthcare professions are increasingly stretched to provide an adequate service when the ageing population means that client numbers are rising dramatically. Universities are faced with similar challenges of increased demand unmatched by increased resources (Caul, 1993). Institutions now compete to remain viable and need to demonstrate that their courses are responsive to the demands of the workplace. Professional courses in particular rival each other in attracting potential applicants from a shrinking pool of conventional students.

Herein lies a challenge for education in general and professional education in particular. Graduates need to be more flexible, more adaptable and require a broader portfolio of technical, social and personal skills to meet the demands of contemporary professional practice. In addition, long-term career planning is a thing of the past (Brown & Scase, 1997) making flexibility and adaptability essential attributes for the new graduate. Barnett & Hallam (1999: 142) suggest a “pedagogy of supercomplexity” is needed for the twenty-first century which would require students to acquire “capabilities appropriate to adaptation to

conditions of radical and enduring uncertainty, unpredictability, challengeability and contestability”

The narrative of tension and uncertainty on which this chapter has focused is an indicator of how the OT course had begun to challenge students’ beliefs and assumptions about the nature of OT and their place within it. Furthermore, I argue that the pedagogical approach, aspects of which fit with Doll’s (1993) vision of a postmodern curriculum, has been responsible for exposing students to “uncertainty, unpredictability, challengeability and contestability” (Barnett & Hallam, 1999: 142) which will enable them to deal with professional practice.

There can be no doubt that the course exposed students to indeterminacy and challenge providing a richness of experience in terms of living certain tensions. For example, on the one hand students experienced OT as rooted in science, and on the other, its foundations were experienced as social in nature. Several students identified with the scientific notion of OT, finding their ‘scientific selves’, only to discover that ‘social selves’ were of equal importance. At certain points in the course experiential knowledge was privileged over formal knowledge. At other times formal knowledge was deemed to be what counted. In terms of differing versions of competence students were torn between technical rationality and becoming reflective practitioners, eventually recognising that they needed to be both.

I have shown how the course encouraged recursion, even if at times some students found it painful or tedious, and also how students became accustomed to

confronting their own and others' attitudes and assumptions. However, perhaps the most significant feature of the pedagogical approach of the OT course is its emphasis on relations, or the forging of connections with others. Doll's (1993) repeated emphasis on the importance of interaction and dialogue, finds resonance in the OT course because social interaction is a central organising feature of OT identity which is shaped not only by research, teaching and theorising but by practice, discussion, and story-telling (Kielhofner, 1997).

I argue that the initial phase of professional socialisation is ever likely to be characterised by uncertainty because students are beginning to feel the need to position themselves in relation to professional discourses. The dilemma arises when discourses are multiple and conflicting, and lecturers and fieldwork educators who are the students' only point of reference are giving out mixed messages about the profession. Such mixed messages complicate the identification process or the positions taken up and identified with, which constitute identity (Woodward, 1997).

Hughes (2000) highlights the poststructuralist conception of identity formation as a contradictory and precarious process through which we come into being because of the ways in which discourses operate. Contradictory and precarious certainly seems to describe the troubled journey of most of the OT students in the early stages of their course. In effect, students found themselves taking up not one position but many. Janet illustrates this point well when she articulates a sense of having become "a lot of little selves to different people". In seeing herself in relation to others, Janet suggests that the notion of autonomy has been

cast off, as has been advocated within the vision of postmodern education (Usher et al, 1997) Furthermore, the self, because it is plural and comprised of changing realisations has not been realised in an essential way, rather it has been constructed and will continue to be reconstructed through critical dialogue (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992)

Conclusion

Although in text the course is depicted as a set route to be traversed, the students found that progress did not necessarily follow the flow chart and indeed, for most of the students, the course was a passage of personal transformation Learning to live with multiple possibilities and interpretations, the students began to feel less threatened by anomaly and dis-equilibrium inherent in change (Hormuth, 1990) The practicum, in particular, provided the context for many of the tensions to come to a head Experienced by students as an intermediate space it also became a contested space where tensions between fitting into practice, continuing existence in the lay world and the intellectual demands of the university were felt Many of these tensions will become evident in subsequent chapters For example, the following chapter focuses on the dynamic tension between the desire for stability and the acceptance of the inevitability of change

However, I argue that the early stages of the course equipped students to cope with the challenges that they were to encounter once out in practice Nearing the end of the course, Janet says

I don't want to be totally moulded I want to do some moulding as well I still know there are areas where I'd go in and take everything

on board but I think we are more likely to as students It's making sure that you continue to look at things critically with an open mind

Janet's comment supports the existence of a sense of personal agency, which in the light of her previous comment about being many selves may be symbolic of unity-in-multiplicity (Hermans, 1997) Her criticality suggests there is an organising self, determined to retain some control over an identity that is otherwise socially constructed Hence, although Janet's and several of the other students' stories suggested that the course had prepared them for professional practice, it had not necessarily bestowed on them a comfortable sense of being able to fit in

"Historically, education can be seen as the vehicle by which Enlightenment ideals of critical reason, individual freedom, progress and benevolent change, are substantiated and realised" (Usher & Edwards, 1994: 2) This discourse appears so well entrenched in education that it is difficult to counter It provides ways of talking and knowing with which we cannot readily dispense even though autonomy, rationality and self-direction are in practice problematic concepts especially in relation to disciplinary areas such as OT Likewise, the language of 'operationalism' (Barnett, 1994) expressed in terms of 'fitness for purpose' cannot be omitted from the script, which describes and defines the professionalisation process Consequently, the OT course documentation pays due attention to discourses stemming from the Enlightenment project and the value placed on scientific knowledge and associated technical rationality

However, these discourses do not wholly capture the essence of what the OT course at the centre of this study is clearly achieving. OT literature indicates that OT's are able to live with knowledge as de-centred and privilege context-dependent knowledge over abstract rationality (Creek, 1998). The suggestion that "knowledge has dissolved into knowledges" (Barnett, 2000: 18) seems to be already encapsulated in this course where knowledge based on universal laws has been supplanted by a recognition that knowledge is situated, constructed and can be reconstructed. Characterised by competing views of professional practice, which could be described as professional pluralism (Schon, 1987), I argue that this OT course is founded on an awareness of uncertainty, complexity and instability. As such, what has been considered by some within the profession to be a weakness, compromising professional identity (Creek, 1998), could equally be considered a strength, not only of the profession but of the people within it.

I suggest that the OT course at the centre of this study provides a context for the development of OT practitioners ready to step into the complex world of professional practice by virtue of its pedagogical approach. Barnett (1994: 45, *italics in original*) maintains

A curriculum is more than its knowledge components, much more a statement of what counts as knowledge in several senses. The ordering and presentation of those knowledge elements in a curriculum reflect a sense on the part of the educator as to what counts as a genuine act of knowing. Further, the pedagogical relationship that the educator determines for his or her curriculum itself acts as an epistemic framework. The medium *is* the message."

According to Usher and Edwards (1994) educators are unlikely to construct themselves as postmodern although many are utilising pedagogical approaches and strategies aimed at helping students cope with the flux and rapid change

characteristic of contemporary life I argue that this is the case with the OT course The narrative of uncertainty in the students has been generated intentionally The medium really is the message, the narrative is the evidence

Chapter 5

Support and Challenge: Stability and Change

Support and Challenge: Stability and Change

Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted how during the early stages of the OT course students were confronted with various professional discourses with which they began to identify. Identification heralds the beginning of a transition process that precedes the development of a professional identity. Change and transition as “abstract representation[s] of a situation where there is removal of the known, familiar, predictable or secure and replacement by the new and the different” (Fisher, 1990: 54) are therefore, features of the professional socialisation process. However, transitions and transformation can be both exciting and threatening (Frosh, 1991).

The dynamic tension between the force within us that welcomes the challenge for change and the desire for stability is, according to Weiser (1994), particularly poignant for adult learners. A study of women returning to higher education (Pascall & Cox, 1993) prompted the following observation:

So often it seemed as if they wished to split the self in two. One part of them had an intense desire to change, to be different, more confident, more knowledgeable, more appreciated by people who matter, but there remained another part that wished to remain untouched by the experience, the same essential person, the unchanging self.
(Pascall & Cox, 1993: 89)

Not unlike the women to whom Pascall and Cox refer the student OTs, who became increasingly aware that they were being shaped into professional people, vacillated between reluctance towards and an acceptance of self-perceived change. Their ambiguous location in relation to the professionalisation process became evident in stories that highlighted the need for some sense of stability.

amidst change. In order to move forwards and to experiment with their new and evolving identities they needed to feel anchored in some way, that is they needed to feel supported.

The impact of support, or in some cases a lack of it, was one of the earliest narratives to be identified across the stories of most of the OT students interviewed. Having been necessary to get to university in the first place, support was acknowledged as vital in helping to keep things in perspective as the course progressed and it was particularly important during the transition into fieldwork placements. Achieving a balance between challenge and support has been recognised as a fundamental element in the facilitation of learning (Sanford, 1962, 1966, Kegan, 1982, Daloz, 1986, Perry, 1988). Daloz (1986) suggests that the most effective way of helping another person to learn is to offer high degrees of challenge and support. Too much support results in a static comfort zone hindering development, while a lack of adequate support can lead to withdrawal and decreased self-esteem. Achieving a balance is therefore vital.

Consistent with the findings of other research (Courtney, 1992, West, 1996) I will show how challenges were met with the help of supportive and 'catalytic' people (Young & Rodgers, 1997: 179). Furthermore, my findings illustrate how different challenges invoked the need for support from different people, which can be grounded in the 'convoy model' of social network relations (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980: 253-286). This model holds that the individual is surrounded by a network of social relations which affords protection as it moves with the individual through time. Changes in relations which make up the convoy are

deemed to occur as a result of developmental processes and transitions. Thus the convoy offers a means of understanding how it is crucial that certain people step into key supporting roles at certain times during the professional socialisation process. However, I am not aware that the notion of the convoy has been used previously to understand social support in an educational context.

Social support can contribute to both problem-focused strategies directed at managing problems, and emotion-focused functions directed at emotional or psychological support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore the provision or withholding of social support will impact on the individual in different ways depending on whether they have a need for practical or psychological or emotional support which is less tangible. Young & Rodgers (1997) identify four primary roles of supporting others, in the context of career change, which could be applied to the notion of psychological support in this context: allies, mentors, witnesses and models, all of which contribute to identity development.

My interviewees revealed how support from other people took on different guises. Although the experience of mature students is a strong theme in this chapter, the need for support was ubiquitous. The nature of the students' supportive relationships is explored through the relational concepts of holding, attachment and embeddedness, which create a framework for the chapter. Within this framework allies, mentors, witnesses and models all had a part to play as members of the convoy accompanying students as they explored a plurality of new selves, possible selves.

There is a growing literature on the impact of informal social support networks, incorporating peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, Astin, 1996), parents (Blaxter, 1994), friends, other mature students and family (Wilson, 1997), on the success of students in higher education. My own research both supports and challenges some of this work by virtue of its focus on a vocational course. However, the university and practicum provide two distinct contexts with which students need to come to terms. Although support from partners, parents and peers seemed to be largely adequate to sustain the OT students within the university, the practicum proved to be a different matter. I will illustrate how in this specific context, informal sources of support had continued relevance, but the importance of more formal support and validation by fieldwork educators, other clinicians and fellow students became paramount. The tendency towards reliance on one or several alternative sources of support varied between individual students. Nevertheless, the need for support in general is indicative of the importance of social interaction for definition and redefinition of selfhood.

A Framework for Exploring Support

Three relational concepts form a framework for interpreting the support mechanisms of the OT students. These concepts, along with others, have been amalgamated by Ruthellen Josselson (1996), a relational theorist, who considers them to be dimensions of connection. The first is that of 'holding', a concept which is integral to Kegan's (1982) evolving self. An understanding of 'holding' and the closely linked concept of 'attachment' is crucial to making sense of how students negotiate the process of initiation into student life and accommodate to new demands emerging throughout the course. In addition, I will show how a

third concept, 'embeddedness', is a major source of subsequent support in terms of professional development once the student becomes integrated into new social networks

The relational concepts are founded on the premise that development and expression of identity are closely dependent on others, a position which fits broadly with a social constructionist perspective. Rooted in psychoanalysis, much of the earlier seminal work in relational theory, for example, research on attachment (Bowlby, 1969), focused on the development of infants. More latterly, interest in development through adulthood generated by relational theorists and feminist psychologists has burgeoned. However, the combined use of the three relational concepts in an educational context is original and affords the opportunity to critique aspects of them in their application to adulthood.

Holding

The concept of 'holding' originates in psychoanalytic theory. Winnicott (1965: 47), a child psychologist, established the idea of the 'holding environment', derived from the physical activity of holding the dependent infant, to refer to the parents' psychological presence within which the child gains a sense of 'continuity of being' (Winnicott 1965: 47). In other words, Winnicott proposed that the holding environment allows for the development of a sense of self as unified, such that meaning and coherence may be maintained as development and change occur. He suggested that the holding environment should be 'good enough', which in practical terms meant that parents should be neither negligent nor perfect in establishing an environment with enough support to allow the child

to explore the world (Winnicott, 1965: 45). Here, parallels with educational ideals of support and challenge begin to emerge.

Winnicott (1965) maintained that it is through exploration that identity is born and continues to develop throughout life, echoing discourses of progression. If holding is inadequate, developing identities may be threatened, resulting in 'annihilation', which he suggests is the alternative to 'being' (Winnicott, 1965: 47). During adulthood, although physical holding may still be appreciated, being held metaphorically is inherent to feelings of well-being and personal efficacy. Yet a sense of being held may escape the individual's sense of awareness, probably because it is intangible (Josselson, 1996). In a book based on a series of consultations with patients undergoing psychoanalysis, Winnicott (1986) uses the words of a patient to illustrate the notion of being held:

I learned to ride a bike only by father holding and letting go without my knowing. If I found I was on my own I fell off. It was the same with swimming. I had to float first, then I could make movements, and at length I could swim. It is the idea of not being held that is important. The feeling is that there is nowhere to go to, or to come back to. (Winnicott, 1986: 47)

The perception of 'thereness' of a significant other has been interpreted as an expression of feeling held, like experiencing a 'reassuring embrace' (Josselson, 1996). It assumes a depth of support, which is so dependable it can be taken for granted and generally seems to evoke imagery of holding involving people. There has been a suggestion that students may also be held to varying degrees by educational institutions (Josselson, 1996), which does not come across strongly in this study, although specific individuals and peers within the institution were influential. Several of the students described being held in various ways and at

various times throughout the course I will illustrate how holding was perceived as both helping and hindering the students' abilities to cope with some of the challenges they encountered which may reflect how the students were interpellated by the discourse of progression

Attachment

Attachment is described as a primary need, first explored by Bowlby (1969) in the context of attachment and loss in infants. Bowlby's work inspired extensive research and critique, which I will touch on briefly. More recently, adult attachment has provoked considerable interest from normative and pathological perspectives and as a lifespan concept (Sperling & Berman, 1994). According to Bliwise (1999) it is this shift in emphasis from infancy and maternal behaviour that has revealed attachment to be local, multiple and changing. Bowlby has been labelled a positivist and his theory challenged for its stated universal applicability, its emphasis on fixed and stable behaviour and its tendency to preserve the Western notion of self as individualised, centralised and autonomous (Cleary, 1999). Conversely, Bliwise (1999) maintains that attachment as central to human existence gives rise to related autonomy, allowing personal change to occur within the context of close relationships.

Adult attachment has been defined as

[t]he stable tendency of an individual to make substantial efforts to seek and maintain proximity to and contact with one or a few specific individuals who provide the subjective potential for physical and/or psychological safety and security
(Sperling & Berman, 1994: 8)

Ainsworth (1989) suggests that attachment relationships are specific types of affectional bonds in that they are relatively long-lasting ties characterised by a desire to seek closeness from the relationship and resulting in feelings of comfort and security Weiss (1991: 68) makes a distinction between adult attachment, typically present in pair bond relationships and relationships with parents, and 'relationships of community' In the second category, he includes friends, kin no longer living together and close relationships in the workplace, on the grounds that emotional linkage is tenuous and only rarely will loss give rise to persistent grief He does, however, concede that there are exceptions, as I will show with reference to my own data

Attachment behaviour involves displaying a need for ready access to the attachment figure, desire for proximity particularly during times of stress, diminished anxiety in the company of the attachment figure and increase in discomfort in their absence (Weiss, 1982) Despite the acknowledgement of some differences in infant and adult attachment (Weiss, 1982), extending the work of Bowlby (1969), Weiss (1991) has more recently highlighted how several functions of infant attachment behaviour are equally relevant to adults These functions include proximity maintenance, separation protest, the importance of a secure base from which to explore and master the environment and the need for a safe haven to which to turn for comfort and support

The first two functions, proximity maintenance and separation protest, refer to physical closeness between the child and parent, but I will show how in the adult they may refer to intellectual and psychological closeness The latter two

functions are also of particular interest in the context of this study. Research has shown that, for adults, work may fulfil the function of exploration (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Securely attached subjects reported higher levels of job satisfaction than other attachment groups suggesting that a good level of attachment provides a secure base from which exploration can effectively occur in a work context. I argue that parallels between paid work and academic work are feasible. However, whereas Hazan & Shaver (1990) recognise that not all employment provides challenges which invoke an exploratory approach, I argue that challenge is possibly more implicit in academic study, making the need for a secure base all the more vital.

The concepts of a secure base and a safe haven are also evident in research on adult attachment style and religious belief that has relevance for students in higher education. Kirkpatrick (1994) asserts that most Christians perceive themselves as having a personal relationship with God, which is the core of their religious faith and which seems to provide a sense of emotional security capable of combating fear and anxiety. Moreover, religion is said to provide a safe haven for believers in time of stress (Kirkpatrick, 1992) as will become evident from my own data.

Whereas 'holding' is described as more passive in that it creates a sense of something supportive, 'attachment' is deemed to be a comparatively dynamic phenomenon (Josselson, 1996). In other words, it involves demonstrable active interaction, in relation to another person or persons, on the grounds that multiple attachments are feasible (Feeney & Noller, 1996). I maintain that the distinction

between attachment and holding is not easy to make empirically despite being able to consider them as distinct concepts in theory. In practice, adults speak of being held by those to whom they are attached, for example partners, and of becoming attached to those by whom they find themselves held, for example friends. However, fieldwork educators, as I will show, are an exception. Despite being significant people who may become intensely involved with students in orchestrating a 'holding environment', the temporary nature of involvement, which extends to a maximum of fourteen weeks, militates against attachment (Sperling & Berman, 1994).

Embeddedness

Embeddedness is a relational concept addressing our need as individuals to belong to a larger social group (Josselson, 1996). Moreover, the need for inclusion ratifies us as human beings and is a key element of self-esteem and personal identity (Coopersmith, 1967, Duck, 1988). That we inhabit and move through many different 'cultures of embeddedness' is central to Kegan's (1982: 116) idea of the 'evolving self'. The notion of a context "in which, and out of which, the person grows" (Kegan, 1982: 116) is, in fact, a re-conceptualisation of Winnicott's (1965) holding environment although Kegan maintains that far from being confined to infancy, holding is intrinsic to development throughout life.

Underpinned by the Freudian notion of differentiation, Kegan maintains that a culture of embeddedness must not only provide a holding environment but must also 'let go', "healthy holding lays the stage for separation even as it meets, acknowledges, and accepts its guests" (Kegan, 1982: 127). As life brings with it a

succession of holding environments Kegan's model of evolution incorporates the tension between the yearning for both autonomy and inclusion or connection throughout development Kegan maintains

There is never just an individual The very word refers only to that side of the person that is individuated, the side of differentiation There is always, as well, the side that is embedded, the person is more than an individual The person is an 'individual' and an 'embeddual' There is never just a you
(Kegan, 1982 116)

Several changing contexts of embeddedness can be envisaged as integral to the process of becoming a professional person the initial transition to university life, the transition from university into the practicum, and the transition from university into professional life Influenced not only by identification with the social group but also with the ideals of the group, successful integration into a new context is often undramatic The need for embeddedness is often only recognised when it is not achieved (Josselson, 1996), in other words, when the individual experiences isolation from a certain social group Gaining and taking up a place at university tends to be regarded as a positive step in the development of most students However, the move from the parental home to university has been proven to be a stressful transition for some students (Fisher & Hood, 1987) who find that settling into university life and becoming embedded in a new community can be difficult According to Caul (1993), healthy and positive adjustment to the new milieu will only take place if the primary needs for acceptance and a sense of belonging are satisfied

Embeddedness may be so closely entangled with attachment to the family that, for some adolescents and adults, venturing far from home would not be

considered and the capacity to become immersed in university life is therefore limited. This may at least partially explain research findings citing external constraints on mature students as the cause of limited involvement in university life (Graham & Donaldson, 1999). Mature students also need to negotiate the transition from employment into student life. Returning to education has been associated with dissatisfaction and disjunction with a current group and a need to search for self-esteem, or a positively valued identity within a more compatible group (Tajfel, 1978, Robinson, 1996). However, research on adult learners suggests that it is not uncommon for students to experience feelings of loss of old identities, and rejection by other students resulting in isolation and anxiety brought about by attitudes of some lecturers (West, 1996).

I will show how the extent to which the OT students became embedded in university life varied in relation to these factors. Motivation to become embedded in practice, through the development of shared attitudes and beliefs, was greater presumably because, regardless of maturity, students sought a professional identity, they wanted to belong. Embeddedness appears to be influential in identity development in that it symbolises not only the integration of the individual into a culture but also the culture into the individual (Josselson, 1996). Hence, a growing sense of belonging should bring with it increased certainty about why the student has opted for the chosen route (Caul, 1993).

Student Stories: Needing someone to tell you ‘You can do it’

University heralds a new phase of life for all students, which impacts on identity regardless of age. The first few months of life, for the group of OT students

involved in my study, was a combination of excitement and achievement at having gained a place on the course, juxtaposed with many uncertainties about what to expect and how to fit in. I have already highlighted how uncertainties began to resolve as students went through what Breakwell (1986) refers to as the process of assimilation and accommodation. This involves the absorption of new components into the identity structure, which is adjusted to allow location of new elements. Breakwell emphasises the plasticity of identity. She suggests that as meaning and value are attached to both 'old' and 'new' elements, a process of evaluation consolidates any change.

Several of the students involved in this study were acutely aware of how the impending development of a professional identity may impact on personal identities and, as Ellie illustrates, the potential for losing touch with old identities was a concern.

It's very subtle but I can identify changes in myself. I asked Pete [her husband] the other day, 'Do you think I've changed?' Because I'm very, very concerned that being at university shouldn't change me so much that I become a different person and we aren't on the same wavelength anymore. I think part of the reason that my first marriage didn't work out was that I'd just moved on – got a broader outlook on the world. I left my husband behind in some respects and that was distance learning so it wasn't as if I was immersing myself in university life and mixing with new people. It's something that I'm very aware of.

Three months into the course, Ellie expected and had already perceived some changes in herself but, similar to the women in Pascall & Cox's (1993) research, was eager to preserve some stability amidst change, particularly in her relationship with her partner. In terms of attachment theory (Weiss, 1991), I suggest that she sought to maintain intellectual and psychological proximity to

Pete as her primary attachment figure Her decision to apply for a place at university had met with considerable family disapproval, because it meant leaving their daughter of fourteen months Pete's support was therefore crucial to her making a serious commitment to the course

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him (Pete) He's the one who's saying he'll take care of the bills He's really supportive It's him who pushes me into the dining room saying, 'get some work done' He'll do the housework or take Laura [their daughter] out He was the one who had faith in me I'd done an OU degree but I thought, 'have I got it in me to do OT? Am I clever enough? Will it be the same?' He kept saying 'go for it' but then he's a graduate himself, so he's got the experience He went to university at eighteen and I think because he was very introverted at that age he missed out on a lot of things So he wants me to have a good time and not miss out

The advantage of having a graduate husband has been highlighted by previous research (Duncan, 2000) Ellie's relationship with her husband seemed to provide good foundations to enable her to consider her own development Pete had created a firm holding environment Similarly, Mike's wife, Shona's support proved to be fundamental to his ability to respond to the challenges he was to experience Mike explained

We got married a couple of years ago She's an OT, not that she pushed me into it but she's been very supportive Yes, it's something we've worked out and planned between us It was a joint decision When you think, take out the earnings I lose in 4 years, including the Access course, we've had to think about it carefully But no, she's very supportive Well, we support each other really We talk a lot I'm not a great off-loader, but we're a fairly self-contained unit

Both Ellie and Mike have benefited from a couple relationship which provides a healthy holding environment, bolstering their confidence and allowing them to explore and discover new selves Mike, in particular, seems to suggest that he and Shona were virtually self-reliant and had not found a need for any additional external support Heavy reliance on attachment figures reflects findings of other

research For instance, Wilson (1997) focusing on the lived experience of being a student in higher education found that for help, students turned to partners, friends or other mature students

Wilson's (1997) study also explored institutional support and found it to be problematic, concluding that the support available to all students was not necessarily appropriate for mature students and that these students were looking for more personal contact with lecturers These factors were not really raised by the mature OT students, in the university context, although several did indicate some dissonance between the status assigned to them by their age and their student status For instance, Ellie reflects

Being the age I am and some of the tutors being younger than me some aren't but it's quite a cold experience because although I've had informal teaching at work you are treated as an equal There was a particular incident when I was late to a class I was held up and dangled in front of everyone well, it made me quite angry Made me feel small

Even Amy as a younger student had sensed how the attitudes of university staff impacted on other more mature students in her group

I think lecturers have a parental attitude to people, which can be good and it can be bad I've noticed since I've come here (it doesn't bother me as much as it does the older people) but they can appear to be talking down to you

Both of these students hint at a need for university staff to recognise students as individuals in their own right To express a desire to be "treated as an equal" is mediated by age but probably highlights a more fundamental imperative for all holding relationships to be mutually regarding and more sensitive to individual needs This argument is supported by research on caring relationships in nurse education where relating as an equal was considered a key feature of caring

interactions (Hanson & Smith, 1996) Similarly research on graduate education in the USA highlights a need for students to feel understood and respected (Rossiter, 1999) It seems likely that an environment where students feel assured that their individual needs are recognised is likely to promote a sense of stability without stifling development

For Amy, as the youngest student in the study, the holding function was fulfilled initially by her parents, particularly her mother, with whom Amy had maintained a strong bond of attachment

My family helped me get to university they pushed me because they knew I was capable I need someone to tell me 'you can do it', so I believe it They're so relieved that I got there They wanted me to go they've always pushed me Me and my Mum went in to prove that I could do this I think they're proud of me

The generation of Amy's self-belief can be likened to Winnicott's (1986) patient learning to ride a bike, holding was vital At the same time, Amy's suggestion that her parents had recognised that the time had come for her to explore the world and had encouraged her to apply for the OT course, illustrates the importance of judging when to 'let go' (Kegan, 1982) According to Feeney & Noller (1996) the transfer of primary attachment of young people from parents to peers is likely to occur mid-teens Nevertheless, Amy described herself as her parents 'little girl', evoking a sense of their continued association with feelings of security Amy's words curiously echo those of Janet who, as a mature student, is particularly dependent on the support of her older sister, Sue Significantly, Janet described herself during our first interview as 'a little sister'

Nearing the end of the course Janet maintained, “the support of my sister has never changed and I don’t think it ever will do I’ll always be her ‘little sister’” Not only had Sue helped on occasions with academic work, but also existing between the two sisters was a sense of mutuality expressed in companionship, which seemed to dissolve the need for pretence or facade and provided psychological support As a consequence, Janet was able to present herself to those around her as a strong individual with the capacity to cope with the course, and the emotional and physical strains of her other roles as mother, wife and daughter She confessed on one occasion

I just smile and say I’m fine even when I’m not but Sue’s a real support She’s tremendous, I couldn’t wish for a better sister She’s always there for me She helps me put things in perspective She’s away for three weeks at the minute but I’m getting through I’m counting the days ‘till she gets back Neil well, I think he feels he’s being supportive and in a way he is He’s working night shifts so he’s earning the money that I’m not earning so I’m provided for financially and he’ll sort of say every now and then, ‘I’ll do that ironing if you want to get on with your work’ So he does support me in everyday things but it’s just that I just think the understanding’s not there

Janet displayed classical attachment behaviour not least in her discomfort in Sue’s inaccessibility Sue was permitted entry to Janet’s ‘private enclave’ (Crossley, 1996: 67), in which she prepared herself for encounters with others, but from which even her husband seemed to be excluded As such Sue symbolised a secure base (Bowlby, 1969) and boosted Janet’s confidence to deal with life, just by being ‘there’ (Josselson, 1996) The importance of this sisterly attachment is clearly evident throughout Janet’s story, although, the central theme or ‘plot’ only became apparent during a much later interview

Janet began by telling me a story about one of her clients who, following a failed suicide attempt, had ended up severely disabled. His treatment by other members of staff had challenged some of her own beliefs and values.

The general feeling when he came into hospital was that it would have been better if he had died – which is not my personal feeling. Being a Christian I've got very definite views on what's right and wrong, such as the sanctity of life – that's easy.

My beliefs give me a strong framework in which I can operate which is reassuring. I suppose sometimes when you do have definite attitudes, even if you say something quite tactfully, you know you're going to get somebody's back up – you expect that. You're a Christian living in a world where the majority of people aren't, so you can accept that you'll have difficulties – but that doesn't really worry me. I can't change my views and obviously they will influence my work as an OT.

I am lots of little selves to different people but on saying that there is a central core. It is all around – my central faith in God. If that weren't there I wouldn't function well on any level. Because I've always got that, that's the real me and the most important thing about me. That's my support mechanism – it even comes before my sister. That's there all the time. If you look at Christianity, you've got a friend for life – you can speak to any time – He's there any time.

Janet had mentioned her Christian faith on several occasions prior to telling this story but had never really emphasised the impact that it had on her life. She went on to speak in greater depth about her spiritual self and what became evident was the extent to which she was firmly 'held' by her religious faith (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Janet perceived her faith to be a constant in her life, a stabilising and organising principle over which there was no debate, a friend for life, which provided a safe haven (Kirkpatrick, 1992).

All four of the OT students introduced above highlight significant others, or attachment figures, as being influential in getting to university and in sustaining progress through the course. They all have firm 'allies' who offer enduring

unconditional support, validation, and affirmation of aspects of their emerging identity structures, often with limited knowledge (Young & Rodgers, 1997) They illustrate how the family, couple relationships and spiritual relationships can provide traditional holding environments and sources of stability, which enable the processes of change whilst keeping them in perspective

Investing energy in becoming involved

The positive impact of peer support on success in an educational context has been well established (Edwards, 1993b, Astin, 1996, Spouse, 1999) While relationships outside of the university continued to be the primary source of support for some students, others began to recognise the capacity of their own student peer group to validate and support developing identities Amy's story illustrates this well A few months into the course, she had begun to settle into university life both academically and socially On our second meeting she mentioned that she had been nominated for the role of student representative for her year group and this was a role that she was to take very seriously over the next three years Amy was in effect becoming rapidly embedded within her group Although her mother continued to serve as a strong attachment figure her conversations began to focus more on her new friends

I've made a few very good friends They help to put ideas into perspective It's a new environment, new people I think with all of my friends they're always there for you It's reciprocated but they respect you for who you are and if you can't do something They're supportive and good listeners Then I've joined the dance society where I meet a completely different set of people They probably brought out a different side of me It's a side I never knew I had but it's fun

University provides an ideal context for the formation of new friendships (Allan, 1989) and friendship is said to provide a relational context for the exploration and construction of new identities (O'Connor, 1992). In addition to students having ample opportunity for social interaction, the course involves a high degree of active learning through seminars and workshops as previously discussed. Such sessions are not only ideal for helping students to get to know one another but also provide a relational context for experimentation with the assimilation of new identities (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Student cultures emerge from common experience, which encourages mutual support and a sense of predictability that promotes stability. Therefore it seems that everyday involvement and dialogue with friends helps to both anchor self-image and validate developing selves (Rubin, 1985).

Actively seeking involvement with other students illustrates Amy's need to belong. It is notable that she uses the notion of 'thereness' to refer to a plurality of people who she calls friends, by whom it is feasible to suggest she feels held. Kegan (1982) would refer to this as a new context of embeddedness in which Amy has become immersed and in which and out of which she will develop. During a conversation in the final year of the course, Amy's comfort and trust in her peers is evident. She describes how, at the beginning of a new module, her group had been asked to set some ground rules for how they should work together.

The list [of rules] was a fraction of the length of other lists that we've made, say in first year. I think that's because we knew what to expect from each other. We knew that to put certain things down would just be ridiculous. Because we knew that there are things we wouldn't do. There's only a few things we really needed to put down.

We all had similar ideas It reflects the development of us working together as a year group

Amy's comment on the laying down of ground rules is indicative of how the OT students had learned to work together and can feel comfortable in knowing that they share similar ideas and values It is also indicative of her embeddedness within her group and their collective embeddedness in the culture of OT She frequently talked in the plural 'we made our mistakes together', 'we're all in the same position', 'people like us' Being part of a group confers a sense of identity through the construction of what we mean by 'we' and 'us' (Meacham, 1999) The perception of 'mutuality' or companionship (Josselson, 1996 148) within the group is expressed, therefore, not only in terms of students helping each other with course work, or talking through problems, but also in learning about themselves and evaluating new identities Near to the end of the course, Amy reflected on how she felt that she had changed

I'm still their [parents] little girl but I'm more grown up I think I've become more sure of who I am My friends have helped me grow up I can see changes in them too My Mum, when I go home really misses me but the whole relationship feels like it's changed We're more like sisters She doesn't boss me My parents I know they're still there if I need them I can be 'little' again if I need to be but the relationship's grown I don't want to take them for granted I broached moving in with Paul [her boyfriend] and it didn't go down too well but I said, 'It's only an option it depends on where I decide to apply for a job'

Amy's story may be deemed typical of many younger students entering higher education, possibly straight from school, who make new friends, find their feet and their independence and begin to distance themselves from the need for direct parental support Furthermore, I suggest that Amy is beginning to show signs of moving from external to internal definition (Baxter Magolda, 1999)

However, not all students became equally as well embedded in university culture. Other studies have found that mature students are less likely to become involved and embedded in university life to the same extent as younger students (Wilson, 1997). I too found that there seemed to be less of an imperative for some of the OT students to become embedded in their new university context. For instance, Mike had made a number of new friends on the course although he did not consider them to be close friends. Despite suggesting that there were people to whom he could conceivably become closer, he had not felt the need to make an effort to become more involved. Research suggests that men are less likely to involve themselves with friends and to rely on them for support (Allan, 1989). However, Janet was similar, in that she had made several friends on the course yet still relied on her sister, Sue, for support in preference to her peers. Time seemed to be an influential factor and involvement was weighed in terms of costs and rewards. Such context specific friendships were seen as temporary therefore perhaps less worth nurturing.

Contrary to Wilson's (1997) findings, none of the OT students spoke of having experienced feelings of isolation. This may have been due to external support countering the need to belong. Alternatively, it may suggest that low levels of involvement did not necessarily mean that the students did not identify with their peers or their academic department, factors which have been identified as crucial to promoting a sense of belonging (Caul, 1993). Instead of being either/or choices, involvement and embeddedness probably exist on a continuum and are likely to fluctuate at a micro level, such as between modules. Certainly, levels of involvement and embeddedness in the group in which I became involved as a

participant observer were high, as evidenced by the degree of self-disclosure and commitment to the sessions. Other groups may not have been so cohesive.

Ellie illustrates how there were differences between mature students in terms of involvement.

I'm very lucky. I've probably got more support than a lot of other people on the course, one way and another, which has helped me succeed. I've been able to concentrate on the course knowing that I've got this huge support network around me. I've got everything and I've not got the worries of some of the younger students. Fellow students, a couple in particular, are very supportive. One's a mum, the other is younger and I suppose I get different things from both of them. We rely on each other, work well together.

Ellie had become very effectively embedded in the university culture and in her year group, encouraged by her husband to make the most of the course. Her "huge support network" included her professional development tutor by whom she felt supported in an academic sense despite having had little contact. However, she went on to suggest that the type of formal support she would seek would be limited.

I don't think that I would use anyone here [for personal support] unless I really had to. You're given the impression by tutors that 'we're here but we're a last resort'. But then I think that's a good thing. You need to be doing as much as you can by yourself, becoming more resourceful. Perhaps I'm being unfair. I might be doing them an injustice because I must admit I've never asked for help but I suppose you want to look like you can cope.

Although Ellie did make use of formal support mechanisms to a certain extent, her final comment hints at impression management as a possible explanation for their limited use. Presumably, relationships of students in general, with fellow students in the university context and others outside, are less hampered by facades.

Practice: A new context of embeddedness

Support in its various guises is particularly important during transition phases when challenge is likely to be high. For the OT students the period of greatest challenge was the transition from university life to the practicum, which is well recognised as potentially stressful (Mitchell & Kampfe, 1990, Yuen, 1990, Mitchell & Kampfe, 1993). Geographical spread of placements means that allies, such as partners or friends, may be distanced and the stability they created temporarily compromised such that students are more reliant on their own resources. The move from the academic to the clinical setting requires a great deal of adjustment and to ease the transition as much as is feasible the course team run various workshops designed to aid preparation. One such workshop, specifically mentioned by students, aimed to explore how they might cope with a problematic fieldwork educator.

Clinicians identified as fieldwork educators take on the role of both ‘model’ and ‘mentor’ (Young & Rodgers, 1997) and therefore have a temporary championing role in relation to students. It has been suggested that such short duration type relationships do not demonstrate the comprehensive enabling elements of true mentoring relationships (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 1993). However, although the short duration of the mentoring relationship is likely to militate against it becoming an attachment relationship (Sperling & Berman, 1994), Daloz (1986, 186) maintains that mentors are highly influential in the creation of “environments that ‘hold’ students as they grow”.

The student/educator relationship has been ranked as the single most important factor, which helps students to come to terms with the reality of practice (Wallis & Hutchings 1990) However, good clinicians do not necessarily make good fieldwork educators (Alsop & Ryan, 1996) A lack of formal training in supervision and counselling and high levels of burnout among clinicians have been blamed for deficiencies in adequate supervision and emotional support (Yuen, 1990) Naturally, the students involved in my study hoped to spend, what are fairly lengthy periods of time, under the supervision of knowledgeable, approachable and supportive educators but unfortunately this was not always the case

For Janet, exposure to professional practice was to test her coping abilities when she found herself in a situation in which the support she expected and needed was lacking She recalled her experience

It really made me wonder whether I'm cut out for this [OT] You're out there to learn but there seems to be this assumption that well you're expected to hit the ground running and if you can't do that you're in trouble Fat chance of support when everyone's so busy [Janet]

Not surprisingly, Janet had turned to her sister, Sue, for moral support during this period but had still found it hard to come to terms with her experience I argue that she lacked professional validation because she had not been held in this very specific and crucial context by the right person, the clinician, the person who really mattered

Similarly, Mike's second fieldwork placement, in acute psychiatry, provided a challenge that was to leave him confused, de-motivated and doubting whether

OT was really for him. Having expected and needed support from his supervisor he found himself in what he described as “a very precarious position”, in other words, not held. His placement had coincided with staffing changes in the unit and an upheaval, which made his integration into the team very difficult. Contrary to the practicum offering a ‘holding environment’, allowing for exploration and development, Mike felt that he had been allowed to flounder.

If I’d just been encouraged a bit more – but what I was saying all the while, in my head, was ‘I don’t like you and I don’t trust you’ but I couldn’t really say that because I’d have failed the placement straight off. I’m sort of glad to be back [at university] – it’s a relief. They’re a good bunch, the students, in our year. When I got back everyone was saying what brilliant placements they’d had but I could spot people who had similar experiences to me. It’s the wounded animal look in their eyes. I’ve spoken to two or three and it’s ‘I’m in control, I’m tired and I’m de-motivated’ but not as bad as I was. It’s good to be back.

During our conversation following this placement, the university had become a safe haven and Mike’s fellow students were a source of welcome support. He felt that he had failed, or more accurately that the system had failed him. His developing professional self had been undermined by the challenge of practice, which outweighed the support offered. However, despite his fellow students, who seemed to provide a reference point and a secure base to which to return, it was Shona who was given credit as Mike’s main source of support.

I think I’m really lucky that my wife’s an OT and that we talk a lot. Sometimes you need someone to wring you out. If I’d been a bloke on his own having to go back to his own flat to think about things I think I’d have gone barmy. If I hadn’t had someone to talk to who could empathise – I think that’s what you really need.

Shona’s support may have been effective by virtue of her being an OT and thereby having good insight into Mike’s situation. Sue’s ability to understand and support Janet was by contrast, probably quite different. Nevertheless, social

support in this context seemed insufficient to promote a sense of self worth and efficacy in either Janet or Mike, a perception corroborated by Wallis and Hutchings (1990) research in which the family was given a low ranking in terms of its ability to help OT students come to terms with the reality of practice. It seemed that what the OT students had really needed was professional support and most importantly validation. Baxter Magolda (1999) would interpret this need as implicit to the development of an externally defined identity. Certainly it seemed that external influences, and more specifically professional influences, on who the students were, or who they were becoming, were particularly influential at this stage of professional socialisation.

Incidentally, too much support, which could also be construed as surveillance, by fieldwork educators had similar negative effects on developing professional identity. When I asked Amy on return from her first placement whether it had lived up to her expectations, her response was, “yes and no”

The work was mainly home visits which I couldn't do on my own, so I never went anywhere without my supervisor. I didn't have my own caseload and ended up observing a lot of the time. Occasionally I was allowed to take over but only under his supervision so I didn't have much scope to try things out for myself. It was quite hard to look interested towards the end and I'm not sure I really learned much.

Fortunately, not everyone experienced extremes, which were either boring or too challenging. High levels of challenge, where balanced by good support, yielded happy students who could readily identify aspects of their own development. The difference in the reflections of the students following a positive experience demonstrates just how vital good professional support is to a fragile developing professional identity. Janet recalls

It was great in one way because my supervisor just really let me get on with it. It made me feel quite good in one respect and in another respect – it's such a big responsibility. But she was there when I needed her, so I suppose I was doing things and then looking for confirmation. I think it really benefited – I had the odd confidence crisis, but it really benefited my confidence.

Ellie, in her final work-based placement illustrates how she is not only held by her educator but feels she can rely on other members of the group.

I was given a caseload and I worked just as one of the other occupational therapists. If I needed any help I had to go and find her (her supervisor) but the other occupational therapists were very supportive. There was always somebody to ask. I just really loved it. I was happy there and I got on with it.

If you'd asked me back in September if I felt like an OT I'd have said 'no'. I'm still a student. I still wanted to hide behind that security blanket – but I feel ready now to go out and apply for a job and get on with it. It did wonders for my self-confidence.

Janet and Ellie describe excellent 'holding environments' (Winnicott, 1965) where they were neither stifled nor left to flounder. In addition, Ellie was expressing not only her experience of feeling held, but also an embeddedness in the unit enhanced by the recognition that she had been accepted by the whole team, accepted into their culture.

Both students also highlight how, besides being allies, mentors and models, fieldwork educators were also 'witnesses' (Young & Rodgers, 1997: 180) capable of modifying the students' own personal perceptions. Witnesses are respected individuals who give favourable feedback on a talent or trait possibly not previously recognised or tentatively developing as part of the identity structure. However, it was not only fieldwork educators who proved themselves crucial to the construction of professional identities in the final stages of the

course As Amy illustrates other staff and fellow students who also acted as witnesses, were on occasions influential in altering personal perceptions

I was in a team meeting and I had to feed back on one of my clients I was nervous but afterwards the other student came up to me and said, 'you did that really well' I'd been able to answer questions and people [other staff] were really impressed I felt wonderful after that that was so important to me

Ellie's account of shedding her security blanket symbolises a shift towards a new context of embeddedness in practice This shift probably accounts for the difficulty that several students experienced, on returning from their final fieldwork placement, in settling back into university life, they had possibly already moved on Ellie had begun for the first time to perceive herself as an occupational therapist Feelings of increased self esteem or personal worth came across as particularly powerful aspects of identity development Her increased sense of belonging had promoted certainty about her chosen career (Caul, 1993) Furthermore, I suggest that Ellie's sense of personal worth signifies the beginning of a gradual dissolution of an externally defined identity and the emergence of an internal identity and a sense of 'becoming one's own person' (Baxter Magolda, 1999 637), a professional person

A word on strategy and tactics: the course and beyond

That OT is a vocational degree giving licence to practice does not alter the fact that it is a degree and students are likely to be strategic in their learning, in order to fulfil course requirements, and tactical in order to avoid exposing their weaknesses The OT students involved in this study recognised, without exception, that their future careers hinged on their ability to successfully integrate into the units where they were placed, as will be considered in greater depth in

chapter 7 As a component of assessment, the extent of their embeddedness in the practice context could be considered to be a measure of their success as intending OTs Or could it? Not surprisingly the ability of students to integrate into practice varied initially However, by the final fieldwork placement the students had either been shaped predominantly into conformity and had ‘fit in’ in various contexts or had learned to comply or to ‘play the game’ (Bourdieu, 1993) although levels of conformity and compliance did fluctuate

Lisa was more compliant than conforming She highlights through its absence how embeddedness symbolises not only the integration of the individual into a culture but also the culture into the individual Her story is particularly interesting because Lisa challenges many of the ideas about holding, attachment and embeddedness which I have argued are influential relational factors impacting on the professional socialisation process Lisa also provides a reminder that concern for identifying similarities or commonalities between students’ stories risks underplaying the importance of those that differ

Lisa was familiar with university life, OT being her second degree She described herself as “regretfully not too close” to her parents but lived with Tom, her partner of several years who I came to realise signified stability in Lisa’s life He listened, questioned, advised, comforted and was always ‘there’ for her, which she acknowledged as critical to her success on the course She had only a few friends but “not firm friends” so while other students were eager to keep in contact with each other during their placements, Lisa appeared not to feel a need to share her experiences with fellow students What seemed to a listener to be a

rather solitary journey was shared only with Tom. This was at first puzzling since she had a friendly and outgoing manner and gave me the impression that she made an effort to get along with other people. Lisa cynically termed this “trying to please” possibly because she perceived that her more autonomous style did not fit with expectations.

Lisa had admitted at our first meeting that she had always wanted to travel. Subsequently, she spoke of “feeling hemmed in” and gained permission to complete her final fieldwork placement abroad. She left the UK for a small rural community outside Kampala, Uganda, for fourteen weeks in the autumn of 1998. On her return her increase in confidence and her sense of having successfully “stood on her own two feet” came over very strongly. She weighed up the choice between career and travel, between stability and change.

Coming towards the end of my twenties is a difficult time. I think all of the structures that I’ve built over the last five years are just going to have to be kicked down. I think I’m going to have to enjoy the last few years of my twenties, what I consider my really young life. The last five years have been spent in domesticity and that’s been nice but it’s just been comfortable. Being out there on my own, it was like going back five years and remembering how it was, how it could be. I feel lightened up in a way. I want that back. I’ve been missing out on a lot. That’s a big realisation.

I knew I wanted to travel and I haven’t been able to, so I suppose that this was the last ditch attempt to do it – by myself and this was what this was all about. It was a bit of an exploration for me. Will I like it or won’t I? After the first two weeks I just thought I’m missing out on so much. I’ve got to grab it before it’s too late. I want to have an extraordinary life, not be normal. I can’t face the idea of working nine to five for the next twenty years and just going where he [Tom] goes, travelling for two or three weeks a year. I’ve waited for ten years to travel, five with him and it’s not his fault but I’m feeling a bit selfish.

The researcher new to narrative analysis is told that synthesis of events into an explanation can often only begin at the stories end (Polkinghorne, 1995) Early in the second year of the course I had asked Lisa if there was a metaphor that she could use to describe the course She replied by saying, “It’s like a long trip in the back of a car with a wet dog I suppose you know how they smell wonderful personalities but you would rather be somewhere else”

We both laughed at the time but it was not until several months afterwards that I began to make some sense of what she had meant She had used the metaphor to describe the course, the people, such as fieldwork educators whose support she had needed to enlist Paradoxically, their validating support had facilitated her new sense of personal identity that had opened up possibilities beyond becoming an OT Not that she had ever really experienced the need to “fit in” or belong to this group of people She wanted to be different, separate Weighing up her options near to the end of the course, she was ‘torn’ by the decisions she faced, between the self she had created, “the pleaser”, and the ideal self, the free self “I guess Tom’s part of my decision too”, said Lisa Tom had been everything that personified routine, stability, ordinariness, “a wonderful personality” As an attachment figure, he had supported Lisa throughout the course but the need for holding was over The trip was about to come to an end

The process of creating, maintaining and ending relationships is according to O’Connor (1992: 177) also “the process of creating and modifying an individual identity within a sociocultural reality” Lisa’s final interview effectively closed the book abruptly on our three years of conversations a few weeks prior to the

end of the course I was probably perceived to be part of a completed chapter and, because of my research focus, possibly symbolic of something that had not come to its intended fruition I was disappointed that she did not attend her graduation ceremony I cannot guess whether Lisa will ever practice as an OT but I am not sure that this matters because the course helped her to develop what she needed, her internal sense of self

Conclusion: “Down to yourself but also down to other[s]”

Notwithstanding the stories of some of the OT students, which highlighted how people were part of the challenge inherent in their transformative journey, this chapter has focused on individuals and groups of catalytic people as important sources of support Kahn & Antonucci’s (1980) notion of the convoy has been helpful in envisaging how different people step into key supporting roles at different points in the process of professional socialisation The five students, around whose experiences the chapter is constructed, illustrate the way in which the individual in isolation cannot establish the meanings and values of new and old identities The process of evaluation that consolidates change is a social process (Breakwell, 1986) However, I argue that evaluation can only occur in the context of stabilising forces that create a sense of certainty and habituation that frees up mental capacity to embrace change Whereas in the previous chapter I illustrated how students experienced themselves as a plurality of emerging selves, I maintain that the support of others helped to create a sense of personal unity and continuity helping students through the transition process involved in becoming a professional person

Stabilising forces have been explored through the framework of the three relational concepts, holding, attachment and embeddedness. Support by significant others, whether they are family, friends, peers or fieldwork educators is vital to successful professional socialisation. I, too, played a part as a member of each student's convoy, as a habitual point of connection, a good listener, a sounding-board, a factor which I highlighted in chapter 3.

This chapter has illustrated how development and expression of identity are closely dependent on others, supporting the notion that selves, and more specifically professional selves, are socially constructed (Jenkins, 1996). However, I argue that aspects of the three relational concepts can be challenged when applied in the context of professional education. I have shown how 'holding' must be timely, based on respect and mutuality and tailored to meet individual student needs. The experience of the two students who were not adequately held while on fieldwork placement bears testimony to the importance of the holding environment, especially when feelings of vulnerability are high. Despite an awareness of the stress that the transition into practice is known to cause, fieldwork placements do not always provide good holding environments and since students have no control over whom they are allotted, the allocation process seems to incorporate an element of luck.

The distinction between attachment and holding (Josselson, 1996) is not easy to make. The OT students spoke of being held by those to whom they were attached, for example partners, and of becoming attached to those by whom they found themselves held, for example friends. This mutual relationship between the

concepts challenges the distinction made by Weiss (1991) between attachment and relationships of community. However, mentors, by virtue of their circumstantial, temporary and strategic involvement in creating a holding environment did not become attachment figures per se.

Josselson (1996) touches on the ability of universities to hold students while they learn although she does not explore this idea in any depth. I suggest that the holding capacity of universities will largely depend upon the people who exist within them and their commitment to nurturing caring relationships. Relationships with tutors were not a strong feature of the OT students' experiences although such relationships have been advocated as a means of developing a sense of 'belonging' (Yorke, 1998: 31). More to the point, relationships with peers did seem to promote a sense of belonging or embeddedness. Yorke (1998: 30) quotes a disaffected student, who says, "I found that I just became one of the many unknown student faces", highlighting the need for students to be known for who they are within their social context. I suggest that the holding capacity of the OT course to nurture students was a function of the students' embeddedness.

Successfully embedded OT students, such as Ellie, became part of a web of interdependence and mutual support that was to carry them through the course and helped to facilitate their embeddedness in the practice context. By contrast, Lisa, who had not become embedded in university life, and had only made the effort to become embedded in the practicum because success depended on it, looked less likely to step into professional practice as an OT. Josselson's (1996) notion that

embeddedness is an indicator, not only of the integration of the individual into a culture, but also of the culture into the individual, seems to be particularly relevant in the context of professional socialisation. I argue that embeddedness in the student culture provides a crucial link promoting stability and facilitating change in the transition process involved in becoming a professional person. The integration of the individual into a culture is therefore essential if the culture is to be absorbed into the individual.

Together, the three relational concepts of holding, attachment and embeddedness have been explored primarily in terms of their stabilising influences, although their impact on transformation and change is evident from the students' stories. An understanding of support, as an inherent aspect of relatedness or connection, has been fundamental to developing understandings of identity development throughout the process of professional socialisation.

One may argue that particular story lines might be expected to occur under certain circumstances (Baxter Magolda, 1992) and it may be reasonable to suggest that students committed to entry into a caring profession are likely to seek social support. Notwithstanding possible links between personality and career choice, other research (Courtney, 1992, West, 1996, Young & Rodgers, 1997) supports a more generalisable picture. However, it is important to acknowledge research on work-related learning in occupational groups (Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1997), which suggests that healthcare professionals do rank support particularly highly. In the case of the OT students involved in this study, the essence of many stories is captured in one reflection:

I expected it to be hard and challenging academically and it has been but it's also been so much easier because I've had the support I feel that developing your identity is down to yourself but it's also down to other people around you who help you
[Ellie, June 1999]

Chapter 6

Virtuous Therapists: “Trying to be Nice People”

Virtuous Therapists: “Trying to be Nice People”

Introduction

I was doing an assessment on one client and she broke down in tears
I found that very distressing I hadn't been prepared for that at all
The course hadn't geared us up for that Even though I should have
expected it I suppose I hadn't thought about it It was
distressing I didn't know quite what to do at the time I held her hand
and said 'it's OK, don't worry Everything's OK, you're safe here'
I tried to reassure her
[Dan]

This 'critical incident' occurred during Dan's first experience of clinical practice and it formed a tiny vignette of the much broader narrative of learning to care in the professional practice context The way that Dan, in telling the story recalls his distress, reveals an emotional response, demonstrating his capacity to care, to 'feel with' the other (Noddings, 1984 30)

This thumbnail account of being moved by a fellow human being in distress captures Dan's responsiveness to suffering and how his attentiveness led to the desire to relieve the situation In the momentary flux of trying to think what 'ought' to be done, the student responds by taking and holding the woman's hand Touch signifies the dissolution of boundaries between persons (Gadow, 1984) and is a powerful form of connection, indicating that caring opens up spaces beyond pure cognitive appraisal and possibly beyond what can be taught through the formal curriculum

The chapter focuses on the development of one particular self, the caring self, in two of the OT students, Carol and Dan It differs from the two preceding chapters in that it represents an attempt at narrative analysis In other words, rather than

the students' stories being fragmented they have been synthesised to produce a narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995) about caring in a professional context. The narrative itself revolves around a plot that is the taking up of caring discourses and therefore represents a partial resolution of dilemmas inherent in becoming a professional person. Carol and Dan have been chosen not because they were exceptional in any way. In fact, I can say unequivocally that identification with the caring aspect of OT occurred in all of the students in different ways. However, Carol and Dan's narratives do illustrate the varied discourses of caring, such as its gendered nature, its association with detachment and responsibility, with altruism and selflessness, and not least overtones of virtue. Furthermore, their stories provide a means of developing a depth of insight into the professional caring aspect of OT and how this impacts on personal identity.

I will show how caring selves are socially constructed and how social identity, or a sense of self built up through social interaction and identification with others (Hewitt, 1994), conflates with personal identity to culminate in what Lykes (1985: 357) refers to as 'social individuality'. The chapter opens with Carol and Dan's stories. Thereafter I consider the motivation of the students to enter a caring profession through the notion of mission (Kroth & Boverie, 2000). I will illustrate how discourses of detachment and responsibility, impacting on most professional cultures and with which students began to identify, were opposed by an alternative discourse of virtue and selflessness inherent in healthcare. Leman (1999: 250) highlights how "subject areas carry with them specific and sometimes very powerful social stereotypes which entail attitudes regarding the 'sort of person' an individual is expected to be". Mindful of stereotypical associations I

will illustrate how the notion of virtue created ideals up to which individuals felt they must live and the subsequent potential for impression management (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992)

Dan's Story

Dan and Jane had only been married for two months prior to him starting the OT course and her beginning a degree in nursing. At twenty-five years of age, Dan had completed an apprenticeship as an electronic engineer

I hated it but I stuck it out. I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do when I left school but I was offered this and it was eighty pounds a week at sixteen but when I'd finished it [the apprenticeship] I started to look for another job. A job came up at Lucas which I got and did that for two years but that was no better. I hated that as well. Day in, day out routine. Not feeling that what you were doing was really worthwhile. In the meantime, Jane and I had quite a serious car crash and that really made me look back and think 'are you going to do something you hate for the rest of your life?' I liked the sound of OT when Mum, she's an OT, talked about it. It might sound corny but I felt I wanted to work with people. So that was it. I spent some time in a local department to make sure it was really me. Then I took myself off and did two A levels last year.

Dan and Jane had recently moved in to live with Jane's father who had Multiple Sclerosis. This had left Dan's mother, who was herself a senior OT, to cope with his father who was a bilateral amputee. Caring, in its various phases, was something that Dan spoke of in a very matter-of-fact way, as part of everyday life.

Since I moved from home, when I got married, things have changed with my Mum because I'm not there as much as I used to be. I used to help her a lot and obviously she's on her own now. My Dad's not the easiest person to get on with. It's hard for her. Very difficult. I feel I need to support her because my brother and sister are so wrapped up in their work. Mum always phones me if she wants something, which upsets Jane. She gets annoyed because I've got a brother and sister but then I say to her 'but look what we do for your father' so it balances out. Jane's Dad is still fairly independent. He can walk

about with crutches so he's not at a level where he needs to be cared for yet but we'll cope with that when we come to it He's divorced so Jane and I do the shopping I shop for my Mum as well, so we go to Sainsburys with three trolleys

Dan's general demeanour was one of concern for those around him His perception of his family was that they were very close and his keen interest in his niece and nephew seems to suggest that his depth of involvement extended beyond the immediate family

Alex is only seven and Olivia is three I'm very close to them, used to see them every week but I'm seeing less of them now It's only about once every three to four weeks since starting the course That's something I want to change, I want to make time for them, be part of their growing-up But I also want to spend time with Jane It's all time isn't it? Obviously I want to get through the course but it's like with the last two assignments I just left them to the last minute But I'm trying to make time for myself now I need to say at certain times of year that's it, I can't do this, that and the other, I need to concentrate on my work

Dan was clearly struggling at this point in the course to juggle a number of roles, all of which he perceived to be important to maintain However, despite his attempts to make space for himself and his work, things became even more difficult as the course progressed

Granny's fallen seriously ill She and grandfather live in Torquay and he's been looking after her for years but it's finally come to the point where he can't carry on So Mum and I went down for a week over Easter, to look for places for granny to go into for nursing home care But it's not easy I was trying to put myself into my grandfather's position He's looked after her for all these years and we've jumped in and said 'You're not capable anymore' It's difficult because Mum wants what's best for both of them He probably feels he's let her [his wife] down It's very sad but because they're in Torquay you can't be there It's made me realise that I might have to face that sort of thing in the future which I'd never thought of before

Mum stayed down there for another two weeks but then it was, 'who's going to look after Dad?' He's diabetic and has been having hypo attacks so someone needs to be with him during the night in case he goes into one That's a worry At the same time my father-in-law wanted his bedroom painted over Easter and, of course, I didn't

have the heart to say no So I've been doing that as well Because he's got MS if he asks for something to be done you feel that it'll cheer him up make him happier, so you want to do it I'm just hoping next year People say, 'I know you've got work to do' and 'I don't want to take up your time' BUT It's difficult This is one of the reasons why I've left my revision so late I've left it too late really there's just too much to fit in and I still haven't mown the lawn!

I'm worried about Mum because she's worn out at the moment Going on placement, after the exam, will change the routine at home but I'm hoping I can continue to do the shopping for Mum and the odd job As long as I can fit that in the week I'll be quite happy because at least I know I'm still doing something solid to help

Although Dan suggests that he could see signs of exhaustion in his mother, he clearly did not recognise that the pressure he himself was experiencing through being pulled in several different directions, was wearing him down too Each time we spoke Dan talked more about other people and the demands being made upon him, such that I was aware that he was struggling to cope but did not realise just how bad things were Nevertheless, he spoke of the possibility of his first placement with elderly demented clients possibly helping him understand his granny's condition more fully and left university excited by the prospect of "meeting some real clients and trying to help them"

I'm not going in thinking that I know what's best for them because they're elderly so they don't matter, but I don't think you'd be on a course like this if you thought like that I'm worried that if you make the wrong decision it's going to effect how patients progress It's worrying With the job I did if you made a mistake you might lose money but with people it's different it matters

The responsibility to clients, inherent in becoming a professional person, was clearly something that was not taken lightly Dan was, in fact, uncomfortable with the idea of wielding any sort of power over his clients and was concerned not to exploit their potential vulnerability Following the placement he returned

to university even more committed to seeing problems not as a professional person with certain solutions to offer but through the client's eyes

I've learned to think a lot more from the client's perspective. If it looks like you're not getting anywhere just keep trying. Don't just dismiss them. Keep plugging away for what they want to achieve.

However, Dan's second placement was to challenge some of his developing ideals when considered in the context of acculturation processes inherent in professional socialisation, as I will explore in Chapter 7. Working as a member of an outreach team for young, mainly male, schizophrenics living in the community, Dan became acutely aware of the vulnerability of young people with mental health problems and the control that the team had over them. The threat of being sectioned and forced into an institution was powerful enough to persuade most of them to comply with treatment and take medication. Many were of a similar age to Dan, making his feelings about their treatment all the more poignant. We talked about the relationships that he had established with some of the young men.

I think the trouble was... I built up too good a relationship with some of my clients. We'd do the budgeting and the shopping but then I'd stop and chat for a while. I started to see it from their point of view. I feel I've got to draw a line between being a professional person and someone who is there to help and empower. I feel, being the way I am, I get drawn in. I know I've got to work on that but that's something that might get easier with more experience.

Having voiced his concerns about his current inability to distance himself from his clients that he perceived to be important, Dan clearly had difficulty reconciling caring at a distance with the notion of collaborating with clients.

But it's got to be about helping and caring and collaborating. It's a combination of all three but it is caring. I can't believe... some OTs go into OT with the idea that it isn't a caring profession in some ways because we try and encourage people to do things for themselves but I do think that we're a caring profession. But collaboration is

important I've got a lot of respect for going back to the chap I told you about with the CVA [stroke] I learned a lot from him Me, coming in with my very limited ideas and experience that was definitely a collaborative thing

When I met Dan in the autumn of his final year of the course I was shocked by his appearance He was gaunt and pale, his usually slim physique diminished further to the extent that he looked very unwell He was keen to talk as usual and began to relate how he had aborted his final placement because he had felt so ill During the summer months his GP had diagnosed exhaustion, as a consequence of an ME (Myalgic Encephalo Myelitis) type problem, which he had found debilitating

Sometimes I've been getting out of bed and feeling exhausted before I've even showered and dressed I haven't been able to concentrate either I started to think there was something really wrong and then that's when I started to get depressed I just stayed in bed day after day

I wasn't getting any better at all and then a friend suggested I should try homeopathy I decided there was nothing to lose even though it's really expensive but I had a consultation and he put me onto a no-fat diet It's not as awful as you might think but it has meant I've lost quite a bit of weight Then someone suggested that meditation might help and I found this American programme that I've been using which has really helped me I've got several tapes which you listen to the idea being that the programme promotes harmony between mind, body and soul It helps you to feel like you are in control so I suppose it's a form of positive coping Actually it makes you feel that no problem is insurmountable

All of this has certainly changed my outlook on life I've never felt really ill before, like you're not sure if you'll see the year out thinking that there's something really wrong It was frightening, really frightening It'll change my approach to clients that's for sure, like showing empathy really understanding how they're feeling But I know that I have to look after myself first and foremost I'm not going back [to the course] until I feel I can cope with it That would be stupid Things at home are sorting themselves out gradually You remember that granny was ill? Well she died over the summer so granddad's on his own now but he seems to be coping Dad's been ill After lots of tests he was finally diagnosed as having kidney

failure. He's in respite care at the minute so Mum's worried about him but at least she's been having a rest from looking after him.

Dan went on to tell me that he was hoping to complete his final placement later in the academic year so that he would graduate with the rest of his peer group. As we talked I realised that Dan had changed, his air of calm control signalling a sense of personal growth. As a result of "experiencing being burned out" Dan had at last recognised that his own well-being had to be his priority. His illness had precipitated an experience of his own spirituality that he felt had evoked an empathic self vital to his ability to become a good OT. His vision of helping others was as bright as ever but he included himself amongst those who needed looking after. He graduated alongside his peers in autumn 1999.

Carol's Story

Carol was one of the first students to volunteer to be involved in my research, only a few weeks into the OT course. I realised during her first interview that she had decided that regular interviews would afford her the opportunity of exploring some of her thoughts with someone who she perceived to be an impartial listener. I was to be the willing listener, and a source of potential support. As discussed in chapter 3, we had discussed and agreed ground rules for our research relationship, including my observance of boundaries between interviewer and counsellor, yet my research diary notes remind me that this was to be a fine line. Of Canadian descent, and forty-five years of age, she had met Roger, the man she was to marry, in England while travelling with a friend.

We went back to Canada together, married and had three children before coming back to the UK and we've lived here for the past fifteen years. When we came back I didn't work, in fact I was a full-time mother for seven years, not working until all of the children

were at school I felt that the care of the children, during their early years, was my priority and in any case, at that time it was more or less expected that you stayed at home, not like now

Once the children were at school I had a few different jobs but I decided I wanted to work full-time and found a nursing auxiliary post I did that for just over two years then I injured my back The work was very heavy I had some time off and went back but after a few months I realised that I couldn't keep doing the job That's when I applied for a post as an OT assistant I thought it would be lighter and I liked working in the NHS That's how I was introduced to OT The philosophy of it just seemed to fit my own philosophy on life It gave me the opportunity to meet people and to help them realise their potential even in the face of illness or disability

As Carol's story began to unfold, her capacity to 'juggle' conflicting demands seemed to become apparent Roger had suffered for several years with bouts of depression, which Carol attributed to a lack of fulfilment in his work His fragile self-esteem and feelings of "a working life in decline" when juxtaposed with Carol gaining a place on the course and starting a new career had, according to her, triggered problems with their relationship and another depression Problems at home were further complicated by two of the children

The younger daughter who is still at home is being treated for Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Just before I started the course she took an overdose She didn't do it to harm herself it's complicated but she'd been going to counselling and had stopped to go to Canada She was waiting to get back to therapy and then my youngest, my son, who is eighteen this year, is in his 'A' level year at school Neither get along too well with their father and the likelihood of friction increases when I'm not there I try to put it to the back of my mind

Carol's progress on the course was always discussed in the context of how things were at home, even though she had chosen to live in residence at the university during the week, returning home only at weekends Although she probably could have commuted, the decision to live away from home, was according to Carol, an attempt to 'compartmentalise' her life, arguably as a strategy for coping with the initial change in identity structure (Breakwell, 1986) The "mental presence of

family” (Edwards, 1993b, p 89) was, however, still constant. Nearing the end of her first year she confided

So far, I’ve managed to cope and get good results. I’m finding I can get some peace and some relief here. It was quite nice to come back on Sunday night. I only have me. You’re aware of what’s going on but you can cut it off in a way. If I was at home it would be a nightmare. Here, I can switch off from it.

Like the women in Edward’s (1993b) research, Carol clearly valued being able to leave her responsibilities behind at home, achieving a degree of independence, and experiencing a different way of being. Despite acknowledging that her being at university was part of the problem, it was at this stage, a refuge for Carol. Able to immerse herself in student life, she engaged with the intellectual challenge of the course and started to achieve grades far beyond her expectations, although this was often only mentioned in passing.

Carol’s ability to resonate with others seemed to give her great satisfaction and although this was not an entirely new self, the course certainly opened up more opportunities for the expression of mutuality, empathy and care, particularly once out on fieldwork placement. She told many stories of the clients with whom she came into contact.

I’d met him once six weeks ago out on a community visit and there he was in hospital in the [renal] unit. He recognised me immediately and we had a really good chat about how he was doing. I think that’s what I like about it, [OT] you see things through, get really involved.

One of her more poignant stories shows how caring is expressed in a touch of solace for a bereaved relative.

The first patient I worked with (on the renal unit) I saw right through to getting him home. They try to do that you know? At least he had three or four weeks with his wife. We made some adaptations to his home so they could manage but then he came back into the renal.

ward and died there I saw his wife and spent some time with her and his son and daughter-in-law when they were in the day that he was dying And that was nice It was difficult and I felt quite distressed in the afternoon but it was still nice because she [the patient's wife] approached me, I didn't approach her so she obviously felt that there was some sort of rapport It was very rewarding

Carol's experience on the renal unit was probably enhanced by her relationship with her fieldwork educator, who she recognised and respected not only as a good role model and a good supervisor, but also someone who she felt respected and cared about her

She's great with the patients more than just a therapist She was saying the other day that one of her patients, a young lad who she's been involved with for quite a long time, e-mailed her to say he was coming back into hospital He had a joke and a laugh So you see you build up more than just a professional relationship There's a bond of friendship almost

There's a feeling of mutual respect I guess it's partly her personality It's very nice to have someone who you can identify with but then the whole department was like that really it's the climate that's been created I think that it rubs off on you, you feel they care and you want to care back

Carol's beliefs about caring were expressed in terms of commitment to her work in the context of being taken seriously and being respected, as an important feature of caring interactions (Rossiter, 1999) It seemed to come as a surprise to her that not everyone in the health service was willing to make what she thought of as minor concessions

I think if you want to be taken seriously you have to be prepared to work hard If you have to stay late or work part of your lunch hour it's your choice, sometimes you have to do that, you accept that I'll think 'just leave me alone, I have to finish this' I've never worked any differently it's like when I was an NA [nursing assistant], staff would say, 'Go home' and you were in the middle of doing something with someone, like hoisting them off the loo or something You can't just say 'I'm going now' but they'd do that I find it amazing

However, nearing the end of the second year of the course, Carol related a story about an amputee patient, with whom she had become involved, which marked a significant change in her attitude to her work

She was very depressed. Because she was diabetic she had quite a nasty sore on her other foot and she was concerned because her sister had had both legs amputated and then died. I was trying to put in as much work as possible with her, trying to get some independence, but because I was on a split placement I had to move to a different ward. With the best will in the world as a professional you can't maintain another patient when you're working somewhere else. At least we got things moving for her.

OT is about caring but not in the way of a carer, but caring in that you've got to care about what matters to that person, doing what you can to facilitate. I think you've got to get into their heads and to care about what happens to them. I mean you can't take everything on board and take it all home with you at night but when you're there when you're with them it's important to be able to empathise. It's working with them, collaborating. I'm not really enthusiastic about the idea of being in a position of power and deciding what this person can and can't have. It's awful having criteria for giving equipment, for instance to be in that position of power or to be a gateway to the services. I'd prefer to work in a setting which is less resource-led: beds, equipment, time.

Carol took her work very seriously and in this capacity seemed to genuinely care about the people with whom she came into contact. However, I suggest that this story is a direct acknowledgement of Carol's growing awareness that there are limits to professional caring. She expresses an ability to step back from direct hands-on care, albeit that she still finds involvement in decision-making difficult. Interestingly, this new perspective seemed to coincide with a change of attitude towards Roger and recognition that there was scope to care for herself and her relationship. Up to this point in time, at home, and more specifically in relation to Roger, needs had seemed to have been met with more ambivalence. During a period when Roger was experiencing depression and feeling very low, Carol's desperation to sort out their relationship was evident. A few months later when

things were no better between them, Carol had decided that other things must come first

He [Roger] did actually, finally about six weeks ago speak to our GP about family counselling I said I wouldn't do it I didn't feel I should Not that I wouldn't have done it but it was something he needed to do I kept saying and he avoided the issue

Since last week there's been another crisis and now my daughter's left home She's at her boyfriend's parents she feels her Dad doesn't want her there I'm quite angry So I'm trying ... it's more for Philip [her son] for his exams We've been waiting for ages to hear about some kind of counselling but we haven't had time to talk My placement will have to take priority and also making sure my son gets through his exams

Roger's needs had come way down Carol's list of concerns at this point in time and things had not looked good for their relationship I have to confess that her uncharacteristic ambivalence and lack of concern for Roger and her own relationship had surprised me, which is possibly a reflection of my own values It may be that she had battled against the odds to challenge gendered discourses of women favouring connection, to put her own desires first, since women are also interpolated by discourses of success and rights If so, she was to ultimately fail as her attitudes changed dramatically over a period of a few weeks However, although it is possible to see how 'selves', such as being a mother, that have been shaped by powerful discourses cannot be left behind, her new position does suggest she is able to keep things in perspective

The children, well I guess that they're almost adults you've got to realise you've got to let them cope You've got to let go It's a bit like I could spend every waking hour on the course but it's about balance as well As a family we've had our ups and downs but in a lot of ways I think it's [the course] really helped, it's improved the relationship between my husband and myself It's enhanced family life in some respects Sometimes I feel guilty My daughter's got problems but they're her problems not mine I can only help and advise when I'm there I think I've probably grown a lot

Interpreting Carol and Dan's Stories

These stories were constructed over a three-year period and have been used to illustrate caring as only one of a number of emergent narratives. Caring did seem, however, to be a particularly important narrative in terms of self-definition becoming the focus of much dialogue, as several of the students who were interviewed dearly wanted to understand this aspect of practice. The rest of the chapter is devoted to exploring dimensions of caring and to making sense of the ways in which it impacted on Carol and Dan.

Mission as an Explanatory Concept?

My interpretation of Carol and Dan's stories began by asking myself what had motivated these two students, in the wake of other forms of employment, to want to become OTs? It was a question that I had asked all of the students during their very first interview and both Carol and Dan expressed an interest in 'working with people' within a healthcare discipline. But as Janet, another OT student in my study, told me (because I was not an OT and therefore she felt that she could be honest) "it's the official thing to say, 'I wanted to work with people'"

In trying to look beyond the rhetoric highlighted by Janet's comment, to which I will return, I have attempted to gain some understanding of what 'wanting to work with people' may mean and the nature of implicit assumptions with which OT students are faced. Janet's comment highlights how recruitment and selection procedures, or what students might refer to as hoops through which they must jump, lend themselves to a staged performance during which student responses are carefully adapted.

There is strong support for the notion that OT students exhibit altruistic goals and values, as well as a strong desire to ‘help others’ (Posthuma & Posthuma, 1973, Madigan, 1985, Sabari, 1985, Rozier et al, 1992, Danka, 1993) These generally large-scale studies were all carried out in the USA, rather than in the UK, and therefore cultural differences may come into play However, the sample populations, consisting of predominantly women with a small number of men and a proportion of mature students, reflect the gendered profile and age range of OT education in this country In addition, their findings are consistent over three decades Nevertheless, there are dangers inherent in essentialism and essentialising the motives of OT’s as a “product of the conflict between instinctual drives and social imperatives” (West, 1996 9) According to Rozier et al (1992) the choice of OT over another type of ‘helping’ profession had more to do with job availability and prestige than it had done in the past Furthermore, Donohue (1995) found personality traits of OT students in a US university did not distinguish them from that of the average person

To help to gain some understanding of what may have motivated the students in this study to enter a caring profession, such as OT, I have used the work of Kroth & Boverie (2000) on life mission and ‘working’ mission Mission is defined as “the set of assumptions that each person holds about his or her life purpose, reason for being, or what he or she is to do with life” (Kroth & Boverie, 2000 135) This definition supports the notion of a strong sense of human agency and direction, which was evident in Carol and Dan’s clear sense of ‘why’ they were doing the OT course, but it skims over the hidden discourses influencing how missions may be shaped

Sources of mission can be biological, spiritual and social (Kroth & Boverie, 2000) The biological perspective holds that to strive towards a purpose is to be human but this explanation seems rather bland Neither Carol nor Dan spoke of being influenced by spiritual beliefs, unlike Janet who maintained that she was totally guided by her faith in God Therefore social influences seem the most likely source of mission for Carol and Dan

It is not my intention to enter into an in-depth discussion on the social analysis of gender but to acknowledge that psychoanalysis is now believed to offer more insight into gender formation than socialisation theory (Connell, 1987) For instance, Hewitt (1994) highlights how people's actions are often unpredictable and inexplicable and on this basis cautions against an 'over-socialized' conception of human beings and the assumption that culture automatically dictates conduct Hewitt (1994: 20) suggests that insufficient attention is paid to psychoanalysis and to the fact that "some part of mental life is unconscious" and therefore beyond individual awareness and control This is a point to which I will return

Notwithstanding alternative explanations, in Carol's case, it is feasible to argue that she has taken the route that societal expectations place on a woman This had been expressed earlier in life in her commitment to her role as a mother, which Tronto (1993) suggests is one of the paradigmatic forms of care Furthermore, the values of caring traditionally associated with women, "attentiveness, responsibility, nurturance, compassion, meeting others' needs" (Tronto, 1993: 3), have been expressed in Carol's caring work, first as a nursing auxiliary, then

more latterly as an OT assistant Noddings (1984) suggests that strength of motivation to care varies with context and intimacy of relationships, close relationships inspire care through love and more distant relationships through a natural imperative to care based on learned values Similarly, Greenleaf (1991) highlights differences in terms of length and scope of commitment, where professional care is more limited and proscribed However, Greenleaf (1991) maintains that socialised care capitalises on the impulse to care for others that arises out of family experiences

Unlike the women in Skeggs' (1997) research on developing caring selves, who she argues have not only been positioned by historical legacies but by opportunities, Carol is a middle-class woman with a broad range of skills such that it cannot be assumed that caring work was all that was available to her Nevertheless, the notion that "'selves' are constructed through concrete caring practices and through investments in these practices" (Skeggs, 1997: 57) resonates with Carol's story

Dan's mission is possibly less straightforward In choosing to enter a career in a caring profession, Dan does not typify what society expects of a young man It is likely, as he suggests, that his choice of a non-traditional career was influenced by his identification with OT, possibly through his idealisation of his mother in this role Alternatively, it may have come about through counter-identification (Josselson, 1996) with discourses of 'hegemonic masculinity' enacted through traditional masculine careers and what they entail in terms of power and authority The discourses of dominant or hegemonic masculinity characterised by

heterosexuality, power, authority, emotional flatness and technical competence are “always constructed in relation to subordinate masculinity’s as well as in relation to women” (Connell, 1987 183)

According to Williams (1993), many men reject hegemonic masculinity and aspire to other forms of masculine identity. Certainly, Dan seemed to be uncomfortable with the idea of authority and power, as illustrated by his account of the approach adopted by the community outreach team, which highlights his disappointment in realising that power played a part even in the caring context. I also remember the emotion in this story, which I discuss more fully in the following chapter, as he struggled to come to terms with whether he had been naive in his idealised image of OT, or whether this was the scene of an injustice. Dan could not be described as emotionally flat. He willingly shared his apprehensions and his achievements with me, his wife, his mother and two other men on the course who were dealing with similar issues. However, he did not feel he could share these ideas with a male friend who had known him since school days. This possibly highlights a need to act out different versions of masculinity in different contexts and also how many positions exist between and within genders.

Women are more likely than men to consider a non-traditional career (Williams, 1993) possibly because for men, work and employment are major anchors for masculine identity (Morgan, 1992). Factors such as low pay and low status associated with “women’s work” have been blamed for the relatively low numbers of men crossing over into women’s occupations (Hugman, 1991), in

comparison to the greater number of women entering male dominated occupations. However, Bradley (1993) suggests that the perceived risk to male heterosexual identity may be great enough to stop many men contemplating non-traditional careers. Men who do cross into female dominated occupations upset gender assumptions embedded in work and are frequently “suspected of not being a ‘real man’ There must be something wrong with him (“Is he gay? Effeminate? Lazy?”)” (Williams, 1993: 3)

The consequences of choosing a non-traditional career in the caring professions may be particularly problematic for how men are viewed by others

[M]en in caring professions are in ambiguous positions
commitment to caring does not sit easily with patriarchal masculinity
The implications of psychological and social pressures often lead to a
management job or work in more controlling or knowledge based
areas of the profession as a resolution (Hugman, 1991: 202)

Dan’s reticence in talking to his school friend about his work may have reflected an awareness of how his masculinity may be questioned by others, but otherwise he did not seem to be troubled by reservations about gendered assumptions in caring. Furthermore, he had not considered how, as a man in a predominantly female occupation, he could be termed a ‘token’ and how being in a minority, he would have high visibility which may enhance career opportunities (Morgan, 1992)

Although at present Carol and Dan have had similar experiences of working as OT students in the practicum, it seems possible that on qualification their experiences may diverge. Dan may well either perform a different job within a similar category of OT, such as in a heavy workshop, or will move into a more

senior position more quickly than Carol (Rider & Brashear, 1988) As such it could be argued that rather than challenging the gender order, Dan is likely to reaffirm it in much the same way as male teachers do in feminised teaching areas (Roulston & Mills, 2000) Male teachers have been found to attempt to distance themselves from 'unmanliness', which is reinforced by the tendency to give men certain tasks, such as controlling the 'worst kids' (Roulston & Mills, 2000 234)

The concept of mission, in the case of Carol and Dan can be challenged through the notion of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986) I suggest that Carol is seeking formal recognition for her caring self, the self she would ideally like to become For Dan, the affirmation of his caring self is a way of avoiding the possible self, which he does not want to become This is of course my interpretation of their motives of which neither student was fully aware The possibility of not fully knowing why they act as they do is supported by research on the motivation of adults returning to higher education (West 1996) "The reasons for educational participation may be at the edge of consciousness, or at an unconscious rather than conscious level Some influences may be repressed, not easily articulated, since they may be threatening to the conscious mind and the precarious ego, or simply dismissed as of little or no interest to anyone else" (West, 1996 5)

If, as West (1996) suggests, motives are largely unknown then Carol and Dan challenge the idea of mission as a contemporary orientation to motivation in a world where individuals knowingly work towards achieving their goal Perhaps this is why they resorted to the rather loose stock phrase 'wanting to work with

people' On this basis the notion of mission is deceptive as it will always be partial, unconscious and unknowable This position is supported by Freud and Lacan, who both maintain that knowing oneself and one's motives and actions is a fallacy because the self is not transparent to itself (Usher & Edwards, 1994)

Furthermore, Carol and Dan like the many other mature students on their course had come late to OT having changed career direction and therefore having presumably abandoned old missions This challenges the idea of mission as oriented towards a lifetime goal and instead suggests that life purpose is modified over time in keeping with contemporary notions of fluidity and change In this context, it is possible to say only that the students have been attracted to becoming OTs at this point in time, influenced by the interaction of many factors, not least the need to find expression for caring selves

Deconstructing Caring Selves

Helping or caring in a professional context has been a concept that I tried to encourage each student to deconstruct following the completion of the second fieldwork placement Although we talked about care in a professional context our discussions led to a much broader concept of care, in terms of family and friends, which is captured in the following definition of care as

The comportment of self towards others, which has the inherent goal of enhancing the existence of those others, whether they are others in intimate relationship to me, others for whom I have professional responsibility, or others with whom I identify simply because they are compatriots, coreligionists or fellow members of the human race (Van Hooft, 1999: 190)

Both Carol and Dan saw caring as a central tenet of OT and Dan was indignant that some people should question this aspect of the work. Certainly caring was something to which they were both committed. This could be attributed to the internalisation of the discourse of care as absorbed through contact with other OT's during the process of anticipatory socialisation (Hall 1976), a period when attitudes and self-perceptions are adopted prior to entering a role. Alternatively, it could be an aspect of experimenting with playing the part of an intending OT and feeling the need to respond to an assumed expectation. Either way, both students found caring as a concept difficult to deconstruct possibly because, as their stories illustrate, it was so implicit in the work of an OT.

Accounts of involvement with clients and developing capabilities, in terms of the OT process, fit closely with the four phases of care identified by Tronto (1993): caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care receiving. *Caring about* involves recognition that care is needed, a task which is fundamental to assessing the needs of clients referred for OT. As such it may be argued that caring about is taught through the professional curriculum. Students learn to question how tasks of daily living can be accomplished, such as how a client will manage to get to the shops to buy their food or how they might manage to eat it. *Taking Care of* involves taking some responsibility for the identified need and determining how to respond to it, in other words, acting on it. For the OT this may involve researching the problem, bringing in other agencies, co-ordinating service or looking at funding of equipment. *Care-giving* involves direct meeting of needs for care and direct contact and physical work with the person needing care.

It was not until they had virtually completed the course that the OT students I came to know began to feel more confident in fully assessing their clients needs. Even then their lack of experience and situational knowledge often meant that they needed help from qualified staff in taking responsibility for the identified need. Consequently, students tended to be predominantly involved with clients at a care-giving level. For instance, Dan mentioned getting involved with budgeting and shopping. Carol talked about working on home adaptations and dressing practice and both mentioned talking and listening to clients/carers as important aspects of care-giving. Performing these tasks competently, whilst a worry to the students involved in my study because they wanted to do the best for their clients, was something that the students considered to be readily achievable. It involved everyday practices and did not involve the making of difficult decisions. From a practitioner perspective, I wonder whether the students possibly provided a useful means of getting the basic care-giving tasks done which otherwise might be delegated to assistants.

Taking care of clients invoked the ethical element of responsibility that, according to Van Hooft (1999), should provide the basis for healthcare. Students became acutely aware of their professional responsibilities once they had experienced the practicum and found their involvement in making decisions, on such issues as placing clients in nursing homes or the distribution of scant resources, weighed heavily. Tronto (1993) argues a need for attentiveness in order to recognise the needs of others. However, she suggests that in order to be attentive “one needs, in a sense, to suspend one’s own goals, ambitions, plans of life, and concerns” (Tronto, 1993: 128). This discourse of selflessness will be

discussed presently but what it seems to ignore is that recognising and responding to needs may arguably contribute towards fulfilling ambitions. More fundamentally, it may contribute towards the individual's sense of self, resolving the binary between selfless and selfish discourses.

Certainly, the positive response of clients as 'care receivers', who may have experienced improved independence in the home or better mobility, brought the students great satisfaction and was testimony to their level of responsiveness and overall caring abilities. Josselson (1996) suggests that we all need to feel needed by others and this is reflected in the human need to tend or to offer care. As such caring provides a link to others and a way of defining the self in relation to others. It may provide intrinsic rewards such as increased self-esteem, job satisfaction, motivation and joy in giving and receiving (Ray, 1988). Carol's satisfaction at being approached by the wife of a dying patient illustrates this well. Therefore not only the recipient of the care may benefit from the caring relationship, "concern for others may bring about mutual realization" (Benner & Wrubel, 1989: 367), reaffirming aspects of self.

Making difficult decisions and balancing conflicting needs created dilemmas which were massive for the beginning OTs involved in my study and some responded to this aspect of the work more readily than others. For instance, Carol seemed to cope more readily with the *caring for* and *caring about* aspects of the work, most often associated with the duties of the powerful, possibly because she was less resistant to the system or else enjoyed the new-found authority. By contrast, Dan readily took on *care giving* tasks, those usually associated with

women's work, possibly because they did not involve grappling with ethical issues other than competence to do the job

Dan had arguably idealised the caring aspect of OT whereas Carol had avoided this by thinking of it in terms of a rational practice (Ruddick, 1989), which according to Tronto (1993) avoids care being sentimentalised. Despite Carol's stories of commitment to caring in its broadest terms, at home and in a professional context, there was a distance in her relationships that was not present in Dan's stories. He was troubled by this lack of distance. Recall how he said, "I get drawn in. I know I have to work on that." Yet he illustrates how care can be a disposition involving emotional investment (Blustein, 1991). According to Van Hooft (1999) emotional involvement must be sufficient to be fully present to the patient. However, there is an alternative perspective, which holds that not only can it be a hindrance but it leads to paternalism (Curzer, 1993).

Like other aspects of learning to perform as an OT and in the process of discovering and exploring different selves, it seems that the caring self is not immune to the influences that encourage impression management. This is not to suggest that discourses of care are not fully taken up. On the contrary I suggest that both Carol and Dan had internalised the discourses of caring long before joining the course, but their positioning in relation to the discourses differs. John (2000: 13) suggests that "[t]oo often learning professionals learn how to present their emotions in a way that encourages others (particularly those in positions of authority over them) to see them in a positive light." For Dan, being seen in a positive light may involve him in creating the distance he at present lacks. He

will learn to hide the emotion he feels and show an emotion he does not feel (John, 2000) Carol already typifies care as a form of practical rationality, which will equip her for coping with the stress in caring (Benner & Wrubel, 1989), because she has distanced herself from its emotional side. This does not stop her talking about caring in both practical and emotional terms.

Learning to Live with Virtue

Being attracted to caring work has in the past been termed a 'calling' or finding a vocation. Although the term has recently been used in a more descriptive way, to link curricula to the working world (Barnett, 1994), it is value-laden and within healthcare in particular, implies virtue (Hugman, 1991). Benner & Wrubel (1989) note that in the past, caring has been associated with duty and subservience, altruism with self-sacrifice. However, the altruist may become absorbed with helping others to the extent that there is a danger that self-care is neglected (Hochschild, 1983). In this situation, potential for exploitation of the carer by those for whom they care is considerable (Crigger, 1997).

Barnitt (1998) suggests that with the development of the healthcare professions, individual goodwill or virtue that energised practice in the nineteenth century has slowly become institutionalised. Healthcare workers are expected to be good and virtuous, hence Amy's assumption that all of the OT students were 'trying to be nice people'. As may be predicted, *virtue is integral to ethical debates in nursing*. Care is considered to be a moral attitude and furthermore, as a moral practice, the profession is said to "provide a framework in which nurses can develop as moral persons" (Gastmans, 1999: 214). According to Slote (1992), to be described as

‘caring’ is praise in that it attributes admirable traits, definitive of the discourse of virtue

Within OT where the very notion of client-centeredness challenges the possibility of rational detachment and the work is defined as “evolving a blend of competence and caring” (Kielhofner 1997 88) a similar discourse of virtue is to be found. However, Barnitt (1998 77) observes, “statements about professional values and beliefs tend to extol emotional, attitudinal and behavioural perfection on the part of the therapist, rather than the messy realities of practice” Nevertheless, a major theme emerging from Barnitt’s research focusing on physiotherapists and occupational therapists was the expressed wish of participants to be, and to be seen to be, virtuous (Barnitt 1998)

It seems to be paradoxical that egoism should be widely condemned as immoral while altruism continues to be commended as a virtue because it is equated with unselfishness (Milo, 1973), despite the increasing trend towards individualism in wider contemporary society (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991). However, Skeggs (1997 68) suggests that the subject position of caring involves being a particular sort of person with characteristics indicative of feminine duty “putting oneself last, always being there when needed, gentle, never selfish” Such a discourse has clearly been embraced by healthcare professions (Hugman, 1991, Tronto, 1993) although, one might argue, not without ambiguity. A more sustainable approach which recognises the altruist as “not someone who puts the interests of others ahead of his [sic] own but one who puts the interests of others on an equal

footing with his own” (Milo, 1973: 1) is probably more characteristic of contemporary practice

Baier (1991) distinguishes between several versions of egoism, as alternatives to the common-sense version that treats it as a vice. From a psychological perspective, he maintains that “if not on the surface, deep down we are all egoists in the sense that as far as our behaviour explainable by our beliefs and desires is concerned, it always is aimed at what we believe to be for our own greatest good” (Baier, 1991: 203). This is clearly a difficult notion to challenge. However, Baier (1991) also raises the possibility that promotion of one’s own good may be considered the best means of attaining the legitimate aim of morality, namely the common good. This seems to offer an alternative position, where own good and common good are both addressed, that possibly resonates with Carol and Dan’s positions by the end of the course. Although such positioning represents a tremendous challenge for beginning OT’s, because it is something that needs to be reconciled at a personal level, to have resolved the challenges around the discourse of virtue is a vital step towards becoming a professional practitioner.

‘From Goodness to Truth’

The research conducted by Barnitt (1998: 95) highlights that there are tensions for therapists who struggle to reconcile “doing good to others and doing good to themselves”. Similar tensions arose for the students involved in my own study. The way in which Carol and Dan came to resolve these tensions can be explored through Gilligan’s (1977, 1982/1993) ethic of care.

Gilligan, linking self and morality, has noted that women often feel caught between caring for themselves and caring for others and see their failures to care as failures to be 'good' women. Her conception of caring as an ethical issue is significant for this study as it emphasises the relational, interdependent aspects of caring. However, it is the way in which she conceives of the development of an ethic of care, which is of greatest significance for making sense of Carol and Dan's stories.

Briefly, Gilligan's ethic of care proposes a developmental process comprising three levels and two transition periods. Moving from the level of orientation to individual survival and selfishness, during the first transition, the individual experiences conflict between what they 'would' and 'should' do in terms of responsibility to others. At the second level, in seeking the approval and support of others, the individual equates goodness with self-sacrifice. The second transition period involves a recognition that a morality of care must include care of self as well as others. It involves "striv[ing] to encompass the needs of both self and others, to be responsible to others and thus be 'good' but also to be responsible to herself and thus be 'honest' and real'" (Gilligan, 1977: 500). Finally, conflict between selfishness and responsibility to self is resolved in the principle of non-violence, in which care is considered to be a universal obligation.

Reflecting on Carol and Dan's stories, I suggest that both students negotiated Gilligan's second transition in recognising that they needed to care for themselves as well as for others. In their different ways, they came to this

realisation, at least partially as a consequence of their experiences on the course. For Carol, caring in a professional context put her own relationships at home into perspective and possibly helped her recognise her own need for care. For Dan, the combination of the stress of caring at home and in a professional context pushed him to the edge of his ability to cope and he fell ill. He used the term 'burnout' as indicative of his state of exhaustion, which has been shown to force individuals to lower their expectations of themselves as caregivers, having the effect of a possible loss of self-esteem (Gilbert 1989). For Dan, whose self-esteem resided in his perceived care-giving and altruistic capabilities, this was devastating. Both students were made to feel their vulnerability. Both needed care in their own ways.

Sacrificing self-interest in the service of others would be unsustainable in the longer term yet both students needed virtual crises in their lives to come to terms with the notion that considering themselves was not selfish but necessary. Some psychologists have recognised the problems of over-identifying with others and engaging in self-sacrifice to the extent that caring can become injurious or 'pathological' (Josselson, 1996). Benner & Wrubel (1989) suggest that over-solicitous helping is both a sign of a need to feel in control and a way of avoiding the acknowledgment of personal fears and unmet needs. However, it is well recognised that one of the prerequisites for survival in the caring professions is learning the limits of the capacity to care (Josselson, 1996). It is likely in the future that personal and professional dilemmas will continue to occur for both students, but at least there is now the possibility of a dilemma as opposed to total selflessness.

Despite criticism in terms of a scant empirical base (Brabeck, 1993, Rest & Narvaez, 1994) and the incorporation of stages of development (Tronto, 1993 78), Gilligan's ethic of care, which incidentally is one of several (Noddings 1984, Tronto 1993, O'Brien Hallstein 1999), has been useful in understanding how the creation of self boundaries are possible in healthcare. It is widely acknowledged that in order to be able to recognise the needs of others, good self-knowledge is essential and attentiveness to one's own needs for care is a primary consideration (Green-Hernandez, 1991, Tronto, 1993, Josselson, 1996). As Dan says "[OT] is about putting people back together again", but as Carol adds "you've got to sort yourself out first"

Care as a Key Narrative in Becoming an OT

It seems that the caring professions may predominantly attract members with a predisposition to service and caring, or at least a commitment to helping and enhancing the lives of others in relation to their health needs. Yet, paradoxically, caring as a concept has become a 'dirty' word in healthcare. Benner & Wrubel (1989 xv) argue that this is not new and that "in a highly technical society, that values autonomy, individualism, and competitiveness, caring practices have always been fragile". However, there are still those who choose to enter caring professions such as OT and readily accept the caring aspect of practice. I have suggested that the motives of such individuals are difficult to deconstruct because the self is not transparent to itself, individuals are often not aware of driving forces behind their actions. "Wanting to work with people" as a catchall phrase accommodates caring in its varied guises (Tronto, 1993) implicit in OT practice.

Care can therefore be thought of as an important route to self-definition for OTs undergoing the process of professional socialisation

I asked all of the OT students participating in my study to reflect on the extent to which they felt their caring ability had developed over the three years of their undergraduate course. Like nurses in a study by Gastmans (1999), several suggested that their capacity to care had been established as a result of a life of care and not the result of professional training. Clearly, the mature status of a high proportion of the students cannot be overlooked as an influential factor. Nevertheless, even Amy, the youngest student in the study, highlighted her own experiences of family life and the gendered discourses in society as having been influential in developing her capacity to care, well before embarking on the course. It could be argued that Carol has had more experience of being the one expected to care. Given her age, returning to education may be more of a second chance for her than for Dan. There is an imperative in her story that says this time she needs to succeed and therefore cannot allow other things to get in the way as she may have done before.

Despite previous lives, the students saw the course, and especially the fieldwork component of it, as having provided the opportunity to explore caring selves in new ways. Gordillo (1998) argues that the impact of the experience of being confronted by suffering is incomparable in promoting altruistic tendencies. I suggest that the eliciting of the caring response, triggered by such first hand experience, is likely to be perceived as highly affirming of the caring self. However, as Carol suggested, at an unremarkable level it seems likely that even

everyday immersion in a community of practice where role models provide a script for caring, enhances identification and professional identity

Carol and Dan's stories illustrate that within the OT identity there is no one caring self but rather a plurality of caring selves. Dan, and the other male students on the course, illustrates how plurality can be contingent on challenging gender order as a grand narrative (Morgan 1992). OT seems to allow the opening up of spaces to explore a diversity of masculinities and femininities and it may be that this is why it is seen as an attractive career option. In this sense, it could be argued that caring may have mutual benefits and realisations for both the clients for whom OTs care and OTs themselves, although this is not to suggest that it provides an easy route to self-identity.

Caring is constructed through discourses, not least the discourse of virtue, which is present in OT just as it is in other healthcare disciplines (Hugman, 1991, Barnitt, 1998, Gastmans, 1999). Yet to embody virtue in the everyday challenges of practice seems to be a formidable task. Caring is more than the carrying out of caring activities, of rational thought, of emotion, it must sometimes be a performance in a similar way that femininity has been conceptualised as performance (Walkerdine 1989). The two are commonly intrinsically linked, for example by Skeggs (1997), who views the caring self as both a performance and a technique used to generate valuations of responsibility and respectability. Recall how Carol spoke about how rewarding she found her involvement with the family of a dying patient who responded to her as a therapist. To have invested in the discourses, and therefore "to speak as a caring person, produces

an identity of value to the self' (Skeggs 1997: 69) which is of fundamental importance

Carol's story illustrates the importance of defining self in relation to various others, to arrive at a state of what may be termed 'social individuality' (Lykes, 1985: 357) blending detachment and other-focused connection. According to Skeggs (1997), placements enabled the women in her study to recognise themselves as 'real' carers, but also generated a dependence upon dependent others for a sense of self worth. Green-Hernandez (1991) highlights the importance of peer validation in nurse practice and Nias (1989) the need for approbation of colleagues, which she found exerted a strong influence on impression management and strategic compliance in primary school teachers. Similarly, I suggest that clients, peers, colleagues, fieldwork educators, even myself, all played a part in the creation of Carol's new identity as an OT. Each of us, in our own ways, validated several new selves, not least her caring self.

Over the three years of the course Carol perfected her performance. Dan's performance, on the other hand, was less polished as the vignette at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. In admitting to being torn by rational choice, what he 'ought to do' and a spontaneous 'sensitivity' to other people brought about by concern and connection (Plessner Lyons, 1988), Dan illustrates how caring as a masculine performance is less well scripted. It is feasible to argue that he has been far too caring, possibly having taken aspects of feminised caring discourses to their extreme. However, there is a sense in which he attempted to be the strong

male, taking on a protective role within the family context that possibly would not threaten his masculinity (Josselson, 1996) and may even enhance it

Dan allowed myself, and most of his clients, 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959/1971) possibly because his front stage performance had not yet become internalised as part of self. I have highlighted how professional socialisation involves learning how to act "hiding an emotion one feels and showing an emotion one does not feel" (John 2000: 13). For Dan this will be a hard lesson to learn. He may, as research (Hugman 1991) suggests progress rapidly into management or a more proscribed area of OT. He may find that an inability to compromise his personal beliefs, goals and moral values will mean that ultimately OT will not be for him.

O'Brien Hallstein (1999: 39) argues the case for a postmodern ethic of care, conceiving of "gender difference, knowledge and privilege as grounded in power-relations that are socially constructed, all can be both learned and unlearned". Caring can be seen to arise from a social position in which all people can learn and it seems that Dan is going through this process. Recall how, in response to the situation in the opening vignette, he blamed the university for not having prepared him as well as they might have done to deal with his tearful client and also how he troubled over avoiding being 'drawn in' to relationships with clients. Dan, and possibly men like him, is struggling to draft his own caring scripts but his story in particular raises a question about men who take up careers in the caring professions. Could it be that such men so self-consciously learn the discourses that they over-egg them?

Conclusion

I have argued that caring selves are socially constructed through discourses that influence the capacity of individuals to think and act long before they embark on the course. However, caring discourses are brought into sharper focus by experiences in the practicum, which force students to confront their beliefs, values and assumptions. How the OT students involved in my study coped with these and other challenges that arose as they began to assume the identity of OTs is discussed in the following chapter. Meanwhile, both Carol and Dan highlight, in different ways, the tensions that emerge between ‘professional selves’ constructed around discourses of detachment and responsibility, and ‘caring selves’ through complex discourses of altruism and virtue. I argue that both are inherent in the professional identity of an OT, it is more a question of extent.

What seems to have become evident in exploring the narrative of care is how, as human beings, we all need care of various types. One way in which this has been expressed is through a need for support, which was discussed in depth in the previous chapter. However, in the context of caring for others, Carol and Dan’s stories have been used to illustrate the importance of the recognition of the need for self-care if the ability to care for others is to be sustained. Student therapists in research conducted by Barnitt (1998: 92) are described as “healthily selfish in wanting to do good, if this were possible, but also wanting to retain face and self-esteem.” These findings seem to reflect the findings of my study but what I hope to have conveyed, in addition, is a sense of the emotional turmoil and soul-searching that coming to terms with self alongside others may cause. Such turmoil may signify tensions between actual and ideal or possible selves (Markus

& Nurius, 1986) As human beings we are all shaped by ideal conceptions of the sort of person we ought to be (Hewitt, 1994), OT students must come to terms with potential feelings of inadequacy created by discourses of virtue

For Carol and Dan, professional caring impacted on both personal and professional identities It evolved from connection as a precursor to caring (Clayton et al, 1991), or in other words, through the lived experience of commitment to other people Watson (1990) emphasises mutuality in caring as a powerful transpersonal event that provides an antidote to isolation of individuals in society Similarly, Tronto (1993 21) maintains that “[c]are helps us to re-think humans as interdependent beings” I argue that for Carol and Dan, the caring aspect of OT increased their self-awareness of their interdependence and relationality The phrase “wanting to work with people” may be the ‘official’ answer when questioned as to why choose OT as a career, it may be the opening lines of a search for self-definition

The very goodness I seek, the perfection of ethical self is, thus, partly
dependent on you, the other
(Noddings, 1984 48)

Chapter 7

Becoming Professional: A Synthesis of External and Internal Definitions?

Becoming Professional: A Synthesis of External and Internal Definitions?

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with exploring how the OT students in my study fared within the practicum, a place in which professional socialisation is deemed to largely occur (Du Toit, 1995, Alsop & Ryan, 1996, Thompson & Ryan, 1996). Whereas the previous chapter focused on caring as one aspect of professional practice, this chapter considers professional socialisation in its broadest sense. Crafted around the narrative of 'coming to terms with the demands of professional practice' the chapter in many ways reflects a resolution of earlier dilemmas. However, I will illustrate how as some students began to establish a sense of professional identity in the workplace, tensions between embeddedness in external influences and the need to construct who they were for themselves (Baxter Magolda, 1999) began to arise.

Chapter 1 provided a general overview of professional socialisation with reference to a number of studies conducted over the past fifty years (Merton et al, 1957, Becker et al, 1961, Morrison, 1993). The studies emphasised the largely structural nature of professional socialisation with the exception of one study that highlighted the capacity for agency. The chapter argued that social constructionism offers a way of considering the relationship between structure and agency, which as I will show in this chapter, were both evident in students' stories of the journey towards professional socialisation. As newcomers, the students were shaped by rules and social practices of the profession and, at the same time able to exhibit some degree of personal agency.

Continuing the theme from the last chapter, which revealed how student identities were externally defined and socially constructed through the discourses of caring impacting on OT, this chapter highlights how students are further defined through social interaction as a dynamic of professional socialisation (Lave, 1988) in OT. I will show how, initially, educators, clients and peers, were all powerful agents of social control, giving rise to an externally defined sense of self. Students began to be shaped almost imperceptibly. However, taking on 'socially scripted personhood' (Cohen, 1994: 79) can involve an element of 'performance' (Parker & Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1995), or impression management (Goffman, 1959/1971, Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

I argue that in the context of the practicum the OT students learned to operate within the system with some sense of personal agency so that the self was not necessarily always transformed. Doubtless, agency was limited by students' desires to become OTs, to enter the profession. In the 'struggle for recognition' (Crossley, 1996: 67) as therapists, professional selves were socially constructed. However, I maintain that contemporary professional socialisation is not merely a matter of conformity to the norms and ideals of the profession but in some instances one of compliance as individuals learn to improvise and adapt to expectations surrounding professional status. The gradual development of an internal sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 1999) was a synthesis of internal self-definition and the external definitions offered by others of students as therapists (Jenkins, 1996: 20).

I open the chapter with a review of several contemporary studies of professional socialisation, involving various professions including OT, which will provide some background against which the experiences of the OT students in this study can be considered. Thereafter, the four primary tasks of socialisation conceptualised by Morrison (1993) – task mastery, role clarification, acculturation and social integration – have been adopted to provide a framework for the body of the chapter. Although Morrison's work does not explore the inherent dynamics of the professional socialisation process beyond suggesting that social feedback is vital to the completion of the tasks, the tasks themselves resonate with the OT students' stories of coming to terms with practice.

Contemporary Studies of Professional Socialisation

Studies of professional socialisation have been found to focus predominantly on the 'caring' professions, with the majority relating either to nursing or to teaching although many of the issues raised also have implications for OT. Melia's (1987: 11) study of the occupational socialisation of nurses highlights tensions between service needs and education and focuses on how student nurses 'learn the ropes'. Melia (1987: 127) refers to the students learning the rules on the ward and about 'fitting in', which simply involved "the need to meet expectations of those with whom they worked". Rather than adopting more proactive information-seeking tactics, the students learned to fit in by observing and copying, and as a result, feedback was rare resulting in high levels of role ambiguity.

Identified as a feature of student life, the transience of experience in practice, brought about by the requirement to gain experience in different areas of nursing

practice, is cited as having negative connotations for student nurses Melia (1987 102) identifies a theme, which she calls 'just passing through', reflecting student perceptions However, she suggests that students use transience to 'get through' their training and are willing to accept their lot because they know that it is time-limited Transience means that long-term responsibilities are out of the question and they occupy a very definite student status

Melia's account illustrates a largely reactive approach to professional socialisation, which evidently left students with feelings of ambiguity towards their intended occupation for which their preparation may be questioned However, more recent research exploring the professional socialisation of community nursing students (Howkins & Ewens, 1999) highlights evidence of a change in attitude Challenging some of Melia's findings, Howkins & Ewens (1999) conclude that the socialisation process is complex, diverse and by no means purely reactive or linear They attribute a more proactive involvement of students in their own socialisation to programme philosophy However, aside from statements regarding course philosophy, such as its commitment to reflective practice and the valuing of each individual as unique, there is no supporting evidence to indicate that students experienced feelings of being any more proactively involved in their own socialisation One wonders whether changes in philosophy since the incorporation of nursing schools into higher education has had the impact that is claimed, particularly when students enter the practicum

A study of pre-registration nursing students in the UK places equal emphasis on the educational programme and the practice environment as critical factors for effective socialisation (Fitzpatrick et al, 1996) Within each context high quality role models and 'anti-models', exhibiting a style of professional behaviour to be avoided, were deemed to have had a significant effect on socialisation Du Toit's (1995) research on nursing students studying at two Australian universities also highlights role models as playing an important part in professional socialisation and similar findings occur in the context of teacher socialisation (Nias, 1986, Su, 1990)

On the basis that the two nursing programmes studied differed extensively in their teaching approaches, Du Toit (1995) challenges the notion that programmes influence professional socialisation per se However, she places great emphasis on the power of the acculturation process capable of producing personal transformation, or what she refers to as '*deformation professionnelle*' (Du Toit, 1995 164) The stereotypical manifestation of this transformation is the ideal professional, who has effectively "internalized the profession's culture completely" (Du Toit, 1995 164) This ideal type is supported through her findings and indicates that professional normative standards become internalised to the extent that they effectively obliterate any sense of agency on the part of the nursing student

By contrast, research on teacher socialisation suggests that acculturation is less deterministic, which indicates that student teachers may be less willing to be moulded than student nurses Despite recognising the professional socialisation

process as one of adaptation, a recent study focusing on mature women teachers (Duncan, 2000) highlights their capacity for personal agency. During school experience placements the student teachers demonstrated a capacity to be strategic in their interactions with class teachers and highly cue-conscious. These factors were deemed to contribute to their transition from their previous status as classroom assistants, or parent helpers, to successful student teachers. Furthermore, there is evidence that impression management is widespread amongst primary school teachers in their early years of teaching (Nias, 1986).

Research on Professional Socialisation of OTs

Research on the professional socialisation of OT students is scant although there are several studies originating in the USA focusing on the development of traits (Donohue, 1995), goals and values (Danka, 1993) and characteristics (Madigan, 1985). A review of literature on professional socialisation, conducted in the mid 1980s (Sabari, 1985), called for consistency among socialising influences, as crucial for the formation of strong role identities in newcomers. Whether such an ideal was either desirable or achievable in the 1980s is questionable but certainly it is very outdated in the context of the multiple perspectives and rapid change characteristic of the late 1990s.

More recent studies have focused on the influence of role models who are deemed to play a significant part in the socialisation process (Alsop & Ryan, 1996), and on the nature and context of professional socialisation. For instance, reinforcing Du Toit's (1995) findings, which place emphasis on the acculturation process, Alsop & Ryan (1996) maintain that professional socialisation occurs

through exposure to the language and culture of the profession, which occurs most specifically during periods of fieldwork education in the practicum. The power of practical experience is well recognised (Boud & Miller, 1996, Weil & McGill, 1996) and the practicum certainly provides a context where the students can become immersed in practice. According to Jenkins & Brotherton (1995: 395), as advocates of situated learning, such immersion is the most effective way of adequately preparing newcomers for the profession. They maintain

[t]he degree of learning among newcomers is determined by the ability to observe practice in its totality, by opportunities to become involved in work activities dictated by their personal development needs as opposed to occupational requirements, and by the appropriateness of the knowledge base gained by them through formal and informal education
(Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995: 395)

A recent study focusing on the professional socialisation of Canadian OT students (Tompson & Ryan, 1996) also highlights the impact of immersion in practice, in the fieldwork setting, on the developing professional identity. The research points to the influence of fieldwork on developing a concept of professionalism, learning the language of the profession, developing a concept of OT and the shifting focus from learning to be students within the clinical setting to learning to be occupational therapists. With reference to the final point, Tompson and Ryan (1996) highlight the need for greater insight into the processes that move the student from a state of passivity and dependency to one of becoming independent and active participants in the profession. It is to these processes that I now turn with the aim of revealing the complexities, which have to date received little attention.

Negotiating the Process: Student Experiences

Socialisation is a subjective process - it is something that happens to people as they move through a series of structures, experiences and internalize the sub-culture of the group
[Nias, 1986 38]

The remaining part of the chapter is devoted to sharing what happened to the OT students as they moved through their three periods of fieldwork. The students' stories, based on experiences in the practicum, concur closely with Morrison's (1993) four primary tasks of socialisation, which I use as themes to synthesise the stories. Morrison (1993) stresses that completion of the tasks is dependent on social feedback, which adds support to my own thesis that social interaction is a dynamic for professional socialisation in OT. Fieldwork educators, clients and colleagues all played their part, shaping the students for professional membership. However, it is important to bear in mind that the pursuit of success in terms of validating feedback is mediated by students' awareness of the impression they need to create. It is a well established fact that assessment drives learning (Boud, 1994, Brown, 1996) and in the context of this study, where students perceived themselves as constantly being assessed, I argue that they learned to perform to varying degrees.

Task Mastery

There is no question that one of the primary aims of students entering the workplace is to acquire the essential skills and knowledge to perform their job and to become competent at doing so. Contemporary approaches to curriculum design have possibly de-emphasised technical proficiency in favour of cognitive development (Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995). However, Simpson's (1979)

research, although rather dated, suggests that knowledge and skills provide the basis for occupational authority to a far greater extent than the internalisation of norms. Student OTs certainly perceived this to be the case, understandably perhaps, because knowledge and skills are more tangible and measurable.

The initial period in the university, at the beginning of the course, had provided a theoretical foundation on which students could build, although only a certain amount of preparation can occur prior to entering the practicum. Several students stated in their initial interview that they did not perceive themselves to be academic and expected to find the theoretical aspects of the course difficult. Similar to women returning to higher education in a study by Pascall & Cox (1993), most of the students, female and male, began the course with low levels of self confidence, despite several showing advanced intellectual capacity in terms of popular models of cognitive development (Perry, 1988, Baxter Magolda, 1992).

Driven by the pressure of formal assessment, students tended to focus their learning strategically (Entwistle, 1990) on getting the 'right answers' (Perry, 1988: 146). However, they were aware that in practice, where professional knowledge is likely to be contextual and ever changing, their approach to learning would need to be far deeper. Yet the practice context seemed to pose much less of a threat. It was perceived to be important because it involved applying and using knowledge, as both Amy and Janet illustrate.

You learn a lot in university about pathologies and things but to actually go out and practice you realise that people are all different
You need to go out and see it, experience it
[Amy]

My husband says, 'You never seem excited when you get your marks back and get a good mark' and I always say to him 'My excitement comes when I've handed it in and can go and apply the knowledge
That's when I get my sense of achievement
[Janet]

Within the practicum, performance feedback is vital to the process of task mastery as it is only when students identify their shortcomings that adjustments can be made. Students demonstrated a keen awareness of this fact. For instance, Carol remarked "it's essential that you know if you're not getting things right or if things aren't as they [fieldwork educators] expect"

On the whole, students had regular formal supervision sessions with fieldwork educators during which their progress could be discussed. In addition they also had less formal feedback on a continuous basis. Similar to students in other studies (Clouder, 2000), the OT students generally expressed a wish to appear competent even when they were filled with uncertainty, both to reassure clients and because they knew that their competence was being assessed. As a result, students at times adopted what may be termed a 'facade' of competence in trying to create a good impression. For example, Janet, as a very petite woman, had to try hard to hide her lack of confidence in handling one of her first clients who was a man over six foot tall, who had had a stroke.

Jo, a mature male student, was aware from his very first fieldwork placement that he needed to present himself in a certain way, which at that time did not feel comfortable

I feel on show which I don't generally like being assessed in that sort of way I sometimes feel that I say things just to make a good impression so it all feels a bit false Sometimes I find it a bit difficult because you're not being yourself

Acting out a professional role is probably an important aspect of getting a feel for what it is like, identifying with it (Woodward, 1997) and internalising that particular sense of self It is therefore not surprising that Jo felt rather self-conscious during his early experience of practice However, there is a risk that the student who creates too much of a facade may instil the client with confidence and impress the less astute supervisor, but may inhibit accurate performance feedback necessary to raise performance to achieve task mastery Kate was fortunate in working with an educator able to recognise one of her weaknesses beneath a confident exterior

I knew I had a lot to learn but there were areas where I was quite confident say counselling for instance When I went in [to a counselling session], I was confident and when I came out I thought 'Oh no' I felt really quite squashed by her (her educator) but it's made me go away and really reassess myself
[Kate]

On the other hand, Amy, keen to maximise her learning on placement, had a particularly open working relationship with her supervisor and as a result suggested "I think I can say when I don't understand things rather than pretending that I do which is silly if you're there to learn"

The students involved in my study rapidly acquired a different set of skills and knowledge in each new fieldwork context and mostly expressed openness to new

experiences, although as they became more familiar with practice there was recognition that many OT skills were generic. This in itself instilled confidence that then enhanced performance. However, students found themselves in a situation where they felt their performance was constantly being assessed, even when they were not being observed. Nevertheless, the need for validation (Josselson, 1996) from fieldwork educators, peers and clients remained essential to task mastery. The need for explicit validation may be driven by assessment strategies. Alternatively, it may reflect the uncertainties inherent in the transition to becoming OTs or low levels of self-confidence in students who perceive task mastery to be difficult. In all likelihood it is a combination of these factors. However, the notion that the self is constructed through reflection (Josselson, 1996) involving interaction and dialogue (Gilligan, 1988) is strongly supported by the students' stories.

Where validation was lacking task mastery was not necessarily inhibited but students lacked a clear vision of how they were developing.

I didn't know how to take my educator. She was very straight and thorough but you never knew where you were with her. She'd ask a question and you'd give an answer but she'd never say 'well done' or praise you for good work. Until the very last day when she actually said I'd done really well, all the way through I didn't know how I was doing in her eyes. You really need that feedback.
[Dan]

Josselson (1996) contends that her empirical data points to a marked sex difference in the need for validation. She argues that whereas the responses of others nourish the female sense of self, men rarely mention valuing others for their validation, instead recognising themselves through accomplishment and recognition that goes with an activity. Challenging Josselson on the basis of my

own findings, which I acknowledge are not generalisable with such a small sample, I suggest that it may simply be that discourses of masculinity preclude men from talking about valuing the opinions of others. Regardless of gender I argue that students were reliant on being validated by others.

For students anxious to learn and respond to the demands of practice, feedback was essential. However, for the students to be offered feedback from fieldwork educators only when their performance was not deemed to be up to standard was not enough. Students needed to be told that they were doing well and where this occurred the impact on self-confidence and self-esteem was enormous. Carol and Ellie recall

I was doing things and looking for confirmation that I was right. Even when things had worked out, it's nice to be told, 'yes that's good' even if you've got a good feel for it anyway
[Carol]

The feedback I got was that I was doing really well. So you can imagine that really boosted my confidence. I just felt that a lot of things suddenly came together. I came back to college feeling a lot more consolidated
[Ellie]

Validation can take various other forms. It can be an encouraging nod from someone whose opinion matters. In Kate's case, it was a box of chocolates given by a patient in appreciation for the care received. While feedback from educators and other colleagues was clearly important to students, validation by clients seemed to carry with it extra importance. For instance, Ellie related a story of a patient with whom she had spent a lot of time.

He never remembered my name but one day in the corridor he grabbed my arm and said 'you're all right you are'. That made my day. It depends whose opinions you value. The clients are the only

ones who can really tell you if you're any good - they are in the best position to know
[Ellie]

It is feasible that a recent increased emphasis within healthcare on the client experience and user inclusion in quality evaluations may have heightened the students' awareness of the importance of interaction with and approval of clients. Alternatively, the importance attached to client validation possibly stems from the professions client-centred philosophy. However, these findings are consistent with the findings of research on student teacher socialisation, where pupils were considered to be the most important reference point for judging competence and effectiveness (Nias, 1986, Su, 1990).

Validation can also be less tangible, such as having others listen to your point of view which, as Lisa's experience shows, led to the realisation that her contribution was respected and valued.

It was in a case conference. We were discussing a client and I had some ideas about how we might progress his treatment. What I got out of it was people were taking me seriously. People were appreciative of me and I was finding that I was starting to talk with some level of authority. I felt like I was part of things that I had a contribution to make.
[Lisa]

Lisa's experience accords with Josselson's notion of finding selves in the eyes of others that are just a step ahead of the individual, "a confirmation of the self that we are becoming but are not sure we are - yet" (Josselson, 1996: 111). This phenomenon that is also evident in research on student teachers (Duncan, 2000) is probably an important facet of validation vital in making the transition to becoming a professional person, part of envisioning a possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Role Clarification

Social interaction is also a dynamic for role clarification. The newcomer needs to develop insight into how they will fit into the profession and more specifically into the particular area of work where they hope to gain experience. They therefore need to acquire information about the behaviours that others expect, and through performance feedback, monitor whether they are meeting role expectations. The OT role is a well-established social role that, despite its diversity, has a particular prescribed 'front' (Goffman, 1959/1971: 24). Thus, students should have little difficulty in establishing knowledge of the field, familiarity with local practices and an awareness of what is expected of them.

Although students mentioned fitting in to the profession, they were initially concerned with clarifying their more immediate roles as students. Such a short-term approach suggests that the period of training is treated as a specific and transient period (Melia, 1987) of professional socialisation and that the role clarification process that occurs after qualification will differ. Paula found putting on a uniform helped her adapt to her new role.

I felt a lot more professional. During this last placement I was wearing a uniform and it's really strange, how people react differently to you when they realise what you are. I suppose when you put on a uniform you tend to act that person – you put on the face. It makes you feel you are professional.

Feeling professional, for Paula, was mediated at least partially by the reactions of others to seeing her in uniform. Students who undertook placements in situations where uniforms were discouraged, such as in paediatrics or some mental health placements, found at least initially that the absence of this visible mark of their

identity made them feel less confident in taking on their role. This illustrates the extent of the uncertainty of most of the OT students regarding their developing professional identity and what was expected of them.

The fact that students after comparing experiences on their first placement found that expectations varied considerably, added to levels of anxiety and confusion, but so long as students knew what was expected of them in each new context they were relatively happy. However, establishing knowledge of expectations of fieldwork educators was not always easy as Dan recalls:

This was the trouble. I didn't know how independent to be or how assertive, so for the first couple of weeks I just did what she [fieldwork educator] told me to do. Then I just carried on - carried things through.
[Dan]

Where a lack of role clarity exists, due to lack of clarity in others' expectations or to mixed feedback, role ambiguity or role conflict is likely to result and performance will be adversely affected (Miller & Jablin, 1991). In a minority of cases where students did not meet with role expectations, usually because they had not been adequately clarified, formative feedback was usually enough to promote conformity. This reaction concurs with Josselson's (1996) findings and demonstrates the power of structural influences within professional courses.

Non-conformity to role expectations, which is attributed to resistance rather than lack of awareness, is perceived as deviance and frowned upon. For instance, Mike learned that his critical abilities were unappreciated by his fieldwork educator. The placement had not been going well and despite warning signs of

disapproval Mike had not adapted his approach in favour of safe conformity. He reflected on return from the placement:

I stuck my neck out. I did my presentation but I suppose I used it as an opportunity to question their service provision which I didn't think was that good. They passed it but marked it very low so I ended up feeling very angry because the bottom line was that I failed.

Mike had been aware that questioning service provision was certainly outside of the remit of a student in this context but he chose to ignore the limitations that his student role created for him. As a result his resistance to capitulate to the system led to his failure of the placement, so in real terms the system had won. This was a powerful experience that impressed upon Mike that if he wanted to join the profession he was going to have to make certain choices. He would have to learn to comply.

As in several studies of professional socialisation reviewed (Nias, 1986, Du Toit, 1995, Fitzpatrick et al, 1996), the students perceived role models to be an important influence on clarifying the OT role and more specifically the role of a student OT. When, at the end of her first placement, Janet returned to university confused and disheartened by her experience, she perceived that what had been missing was a role model. She reflected, "this is my first year, my very first placement. What I needed was a good role model."

What did students mean by a good role model? Opinions varied slightly but included "someone you want to emulate because of their good qualities", "a good OT", "someone who has knowledge but is not detached from people", "someone commanding respect of colleagues". Meeting a person who embodies

the type of person we would like to be, our ideal, helps to shape us as individuals. Other people represent what may be possible and therefore various people are likely to embody our idealisations at different periods during our lives (Josselson, 1996). Admiring and attempting to emulate those whom we admire signals identification with the individual, although in terms of professional socialisation I argue that this is closely linked to role. According to Josselson (1996: 128) idealisation, as an aspect of ambition, is necessary to growth because it gives a “sense of vista, motion or transcendence of the boundaries of self and limitation.”

Role models embody our idealisations.

Josselson (1996) suggests that adolescents and young adults still exploring possible identities are more likely to be influenced by idealisation. However, I argue that transitions in adulthood continue to be shaped by envisioning possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) often embodied in other people. It is feasible that with age comes a realistic balance between recognising that no one fulfils an ideal image. Nevertheless, several mature students mentioned coming into contact with an OT who had inspired them to want to become OTs themselves, illustrating how people continue to influence us profoundly, particularly when we are in transition.

Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would like to become but also “the selves we are afraid of becoming” (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 954). Whereas identification with a role model is well supported as an important socialising factor, I argue that in the context of this study, counter-identification or the recognition of anti-models (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996) was equally if not more

powerful an influence on the students' developing professional identities. For instance, when Mike reflected on his failed placement, and on the tensions between himself and his educator, he pointed out the qualities that he did not admire and did not want to possess:

I hope when I qualify, if I ever have students, that I'll be very different that I'll never ever be like that. I was treated like muck. She had no rapport with the clients, no interest in them really, whereas I got on well with most of them. That probably didn't help. It was a dreadful experience, one of the worst experiences of my life. I felt that the service provision was very poor, really inadequate, yet their outcome figures looked brilliant but they weren't doing a lot for their clients. I couldn't work in that sort of situation.

Similarly, Janet, perhaps predictably following a difficult placement, suggested that she might find it easier to identify the characteristics of an anti-model than a good role model:

She was the sort of person who said she'd do something then never did it, very disorganised. I don't really think that she wanted a student. She didn't give me much in the way of feedback. We discussed things to a certain extent but she used to give me this disapproving look. I thought at times they were all very unprofessional, gossiping about patients, joking, being personal. I've got a sense of humour but I felt it was wrong.

Both Janet and Mike identified qualities that led to their inability to respect their supposed role models and gave them insight into the selves they did not wish to become in the longer term.

Meanwhile, fitting into the student role on placement, although sometimes frustrating and fraught with uncertainties, carried with it a certain amount of protection. Students could at least retreat from having to handle some more difficult situations and found confidence in knowing that they would be precluded from some challenges. For instance, Ellie had found that "being able to

say 'I'm only a student' really gives me a get-out" Moreover, because students were aware that the ultimate responsibility for their clients rested with their fieldwork educator, student status was seen as "a safety net" [Carol] or a "security blanket" [Ellie] Students acknowledged that this probably gave them a certain amount of confidence to experiment although they were keen to stay within what they determined to be safe boundaries

Role clarification progressed with the course as students began to realise expectations, adapting to feedback from supervisors and colleagues Some were keen to hold on to their student status for as long as possible, probably because it felt more safe, while others began to identify more closely with their ultimate goal of becoming an OT, finding their professional selves Paula at the end of the second year of the course maintained, "I don't feel like an OT I still feel like a student because, after all, they (practitioners) perceive us to be students" Whether Paula had been treated like a student because that is how she acted or whether she fit into the mould because it was how she was treated is open to debate Although Paula's experience was not uncommon, insight developed from other students suggests that there were clearly situations in which certain students were given the responsibility and autonomy consistent with junior colleagues For example, Ellie found to her amazement, on arriving at her final placement, that she was given a caseload and allowed to get on with it Her role had been well defined

I worked just as one of the other OT's and really loved it It was so nice to feel that somebody had the trust in me to let me get on with the job It was the perfect environment for me because I hate to feel that someone's breathing down my neck but then the support was there when I needed it

Ellie's experience challenges Bloom's (1965) suggestion that students are regarded and treated as students rather than as junior colleagues albeit she recognised her subordinate position in the workplace hierarchy. However, it could be argued that in terms of power relations there is little to distinguish the roles of a competent student and a junior member of qualified staff. Certainly, the association between lack of power and limited feelings of well-being and comfort (Becker et al, 1961) can be challenged with reference to Ellie's experience.

Amy, a younger student involved in the study, who found herself on placement in the same unit as a more mature student, draws attention to the possible influence of variables, such as maturity and lifestyle, on how readily students are able to clarify their role during their time in the practicum.

I sort of fit in... it's just that Gill seems to be treated more as a member of staff whereas I'm treated as a student. It's been interesting to watch how they treat us both. I get on well with the technical assistants who are generally younger whereas Gill has children only a couple of years younger than me. I think that because of her age they expect more of her, they see her more as one of them.

Amy's suggestion regarding maturity could be quite convincing, if it were not for the experience of another, younger student given more responsibility in her very first fieldwork placement, which indicates that this relationship is too simplistic.

The first few weeks were mainly observation but then they started to let me do a few things and by the end I was doing things by myself. They checked that things were OK but by the end of the placement they let me do quite a lot on my own. I went on a home visit on my own which I'm not sure should really happen but they felt it was all right. We'd done a few [home visits]. It was incredible. I felt... really felt a bit more like an OT, not just a student on placement.
[Leanne]

What may explain the varied experience of students, some of whom like Gill were treated more as colleagues, is their active cue-seeking and involvement in

shaping their experience in the practicum. In other words, personal agency may have had a differential impact on how students were perceived by their educators, and therefore on how easily they clarified their role. Students who are responsive to feedback, who involve themselves, who conform, are more likely through their interactions to receive greater levels of feedback and validation. In effect, these students are 'playing the game' (Bourdieu, 1993) to their own advantage.

Notwithstanding some scope for personal agency, the student role within the practicum, proved itself to be rather narrowly defined in some contexts. As a consequence, it became evident that the mature students were particularly vulnerable to over-stepping the boundaries of what was required of them as students. Many mature students enter OT programmes with considerable work experience, a significant proportion having been in paid employment in an OT service in an assistant or clerical role (Craig & Alderman, 1998). Perhaps not surprisingly, admissions tutors take a positive view of experience gained from working as an OT assistant.

Research on community nursing students (Howkins & Ewens, 1997), who already possessed a working knowledge of nursing through prior experience, highlights the likelihood that nursing students will have already identified with the role of the nurse prior to embarking on gaining the qualification. I suggest that similarly for some of the mature OT students, who had already established a clear vision of their future occupation, it was far more difficult to come to terms with their student role. These difficulties arise because pre-existing internal definitions are perpetually challenged, confronting students with the task of

recasting selves with which they had become comfortable (Baxter Magolda, 1999)

Mike illustrates this point well. He had owned his own business, with a 'high street' shop and a factory unit until, after twelve years, he began to feel unfulfilled by his work. While completing an Access course, as a condition for his place on the OT course, Mike had worked in a learning disabilities unit as an OT assistant. Several other students were in a similar position, one had owned and run a restaurant, another held a position of autonomy in the Regional Health Authority, and all had prior experience of OT. It is not surprising that undergoing the process of external definition (Baxter Magolda, 1999) and bowing to subservient conformity did not come easily to some of these students who had run their own businesses, managed office staff and raised families prior to the course. However, from a wider perspective perhaps, bowing to conformity and to external definition are necessary in a junior therapist entering a hierarchical system at the bottom of the ladder, regardless of past experience.

All of the students in this study highlight the capacity for role transitions in adulthood and the possibility of a protean self (Lifton, 1993). However, the experiences of the students suggest that role transitions are not always as easily accomplished as may have been envisaged and that transition periods even in adulthood create feelings of vulnerability and the need for affirmation from others.

Acculturation

Acculturation, as one of the primary tasks of socialisation, involves gaining insight at different levels into the culture of the profession, organisation or unit, then accommodating to it, identifying with it and becoming assimilated into it (Nias, 1986). Within OT this meant learning through first-hand experience where OTs fit within the medical hierarchy, deconstructing concepts like client-centeredness, seeing models of practice in use and learning to use professional jargon. However, within OT professional acculturation is complicated by differing specialties and contexts of practice. The fieldwork education component of the course is structured to provide three substantial periods of time in the practicum offering the opportunity to gain experience in disparate areas of practice, such as mental health or physical disability, based in an acute or primary care setting.

In addition the course offers the opportunity for third year students to complete their final placement abroad, therefore cultural differences may also impact on acculturation. As a result, and consistent with the suggestion that cultural norms and values of a profession will vary within that profession (Becker et al, 1961), students found themselves having to adapt to changing norms and values from one unit to another.

Leanne spent her final placement in an intensive home rehabilitation scheme for stroke patients in Sweden, where the client-centred approach was taken to its extreme.

Resources were amazing Patients go home quickly One patient I worked with was home within eight days with a full care package We were there to see him within the first day and over the next three weeks we saw him two or three times a day Everything was put on a contract based on his aims It was negotiated, but on his terms It's revolutionised my idea of practice, you give patients the information so that they can make the choices

In contrast, Dan worked as a member of an outreach team for young schizophrenics living in the community in a UK inner city location

Most of the clients didn't engage with the services and were non-compliant with treatment A lot were young lads in their twenties They were thinking 'I don't want to take the drugs' but they've always got the threat that if they don't comply with treatment they'll end up back in hospital So it really reflected the medical model I couldn't work out why they couldn't wean people onto the minimum medication but I suppose they're watching their own backs Also I felt there were too many middle class values put on these people If you let them lead the life they want to lead they'd end up just sitting in a flat 24 hours a day - just eating a tin of baked beans But then again, is there anything wrong with that? You're imposing your levels of quality of life on another individual, aren't you? It's made me re-think what I might do when I qualify I thought what I was coming into was client-centred but it's all to do with power It should be a case of empowering them I know there are certain constraints but I think as a profession it's really important that we don't forget that

As both of these students illustrate, the diversity of experience inherent in the acculturation process challenged existing values and beliefs, creating personal, ethical and moral dilemmas that had to be negotiated This led to identity confusion for some students, particularly those possessing an idealised perspective on the contribution of OT to patient well-being Dan had not shared his feelings about his placement experience with his educator, who presumably thought that Dan had become acclimatised to his work in the unit Having gained a good mark for the placement he had been glad to leave by the end of it and his vision of a future in OT and specifically in mental health had become less certain

The diverse nature of OT allows for a wide variation of cultures, such that students were generally able to find a culture in which they could envisage working after qualification. Lisa suggested that mental health and learning disability services accommodated 'the more alternative types'. According to Leanne, acute services seemed to attract 'those who worked best in a more structured environment' and 'a hierarchical system'. By being exposed to a range of cultures into which they were required to fit, at least in the shorter term, students began to perceive themselves as multiple selves, 'putting on different faces to suit' [Leanne]

Of course, students like Dan illustrate how students can act in accordance with normative beliefs and values inherent in a cultural setting without actually believing in them or directly challenging them (Abrams, 1992, Cohen, 1994). In other words, they accommodate certain cultural norms but do not identify with them. However, this does not necessarily preclude their becoming assimilated into the system, if they are prepared to live with it, with the risk that complacency may result because norms are pervasive.

The power of cultural norms was evident in the gradual shift in students' attitudes to their relationships with clients, which was possibly the most notable indicator of the students' assimilation into a professional culture. Initially, relationships tended to be idealised as something closer to a friendship, inspired by a theoretical awareness of and a wish to avoid using power differentials in client-therapist interactions.

I think my relationship with a lot of clients was probably more friendly than a lot of OTs I think I handled things professionally but I really didn't want to be seen as well I'm a student and I'm not qualified, but I wanted to be seen more on a level
[Janet]

I think I built up too good a relationship with my clients At the end I was very much like a friend We could talk to each other and I could see things from their point of view but I think I was too friendly You've got the danger of becoming too attached but you've got to develop a good relationship A professional relationship
[Dan]

However, it seemed that as students began to identify with the professional culture so they became aware of an expectation of distancing themselves from their clients Keeping a professional distance has been associated with establishing and maintaining professional power (Hugman, 1991) Janet attributed her more friendly approach to being a student, implying that as such it was less problematic, but as both she and Dan inferred, there are expectations which in time they felt they would have to fulfil, expectations consistent with a professional culture and professional selves This further highlights recurrent tensions between discourses of caring and connection and detachment and responsibility inherent in OT, which have already been explored in the previous chapter

While gaining insight into the culture of the profession, the OT students discerned a particular student OT culture with its own set of 'unwritten rules' that according to Melia (1987), is part of learning to be a professional person These unwritten rules are, in effect, an implicit curriculum (Eisner, 1985) symbolic of discourses impacting on the student professional The varied behaviours apparent on fieldwork placement, arising from the taking up of these discourses, involved

students looking keen and enthusiastic, avoiding clock-watching, being polite, keeping busy, putting others first and getting a balance between being confident, but not too confident. These behaviours were quickly learned, illustrating how effectively the rules of the student subculture had been learned. However, because the behaviours led to positive feedback their salience in professional practice was reinforced.

Nevertheless, all of these behaviours could be deemed largely reactive. The two most prevalent strategies used during the three periods of fieldwork experience were to make conscious decisions to 'put up with things' and to 'not rock the boat' which are described by Jo and Dan.

If I had another problem with my educator I'd try and sort it out myself or just sit tight until the end of the placement probably. Put up and shut up provided they were going to pass me which is probably wrong because that way might not be as effective for learning. But I'd find it easier to put up with it than be confrontational. It might make things even worse.
[Jo]

I think if I was qualified I'd try and change things but I've learned being a student, if you open your mouth too many times well, mud can stick. If people don't like what you have to say. So I tend to keep my mouth shut a lot of the time. Because at the end of the day I want the highest mark I can get. I don't want to rock the boat.
[Dan]

Su (1990: 386) found a similar tendency in student teachers who learned to 'abide by the rules', to co-operate, trying not to "rearrange furniture in the minister's house". For the OT students, the temporary nature of the fieldwork placements may have played a part in adopting submissive strategies. However, for Jo and Dan, these strategies seem to have been learned as a way of actively managing the experience in a way that they hoped would actively avoid conflict,

rather than being purely reactive. The use of the strategies may also signal tensions between being 'good' students and internal voices (Baxter Magolda, 1999)

In terms of 'ways of knowing', explored by Belenkey et al (1986), silence or the sense of having no voice, may be considered to be indicative of poor intellectual development. Alternatively, it may be due to lack of confidence (Lewis, 1994). However, discounting both of these explanations, I argue that for these students silence was a chosen option rather than the only option. Lack of voice is particularly questionable seeing as the students specifically address interactive processes, incorporating activities such as barriers to communication and assertiveness, within the course. However, instead of helping students gain a voice it possibly confers greater knowledge of the benefits of keeping quiet. It is likely that students remain silent because they believe, with what seems to be good cause, that evidence of non-identification may preclude access to the profession, which is dependent on gaining approval of gatekeepers.

In terms of developing a voice, which would seem to be fundamental to professional practice, it is interesting to compare expectations within the cultural context of the university with those outside. There had been an expectation that students should develop the ability to engage in active debate and challenge in the *laissez-aller* context of the university. Leanne recalled

The first few weeks were dreadful. You'd sit there and no one would say anything but now we all chip in. It only takes one to start the ball rolling. Before [starting the course] I wouldn't have dreamed of saying anything in that sort of situation but if no one says anything

you're not going to get anything from tutorials or seminars Now I don't mind speaking up

Mike developed this theme by adding, "sometimes we talk through quite controversial issues and the ideas are quite radical" Certainly, the students had perceived little risk in being radical or critical and speaking out in the university However, the critical selves developed within the higher education context seemed to pose problems for the students once out in clinical practice, where a silent self was perceived to be safer, certainly in some situations

Exploring why this should be the case I was told, by several of the OT students whom I interviewed, that in practice the emphasis was frequently on getting the job done without too many questions, supporting research findings suggesting a questioning attitude is met with ambivalence in the workplace (Barnitt & Salmond, 2000) Not surprisingly, this pragmatic approach to practice had made students reappraise their conceptions of OT and their role within it I myself felt very sorry that this attitude existed, although because my research is very limited, I cannot make any claims about its prevalence Nevertheless, I suggest that such a pragmatic attitude, even if it is held by a limited number of clinicians, is hazardous to the culture of OT because it may reflect the de-intellectualisation of practice One can only hope that the questioning students of today will be the role models for future students

Social Integration

The final task leading to socialisation is the ability to become socially integrated, which is dependent on an appreciation of the culture into which integration is

sought Together with insight into appropriate behaviours and attitudes that should guide the newcomer, social feedback again provides the mechanism through which students can monitor their progress towards integration Paula recognised the importance of social integration and made a conscious effort to ensure that she was seen to be integrating

It is important to fit in with colleagues There was another girl on placement with me and she didn't fit in at all It wasn't entirely her fault, there were other reasons but I think it did tell in her final marks If you were seen to be getting on with people, going to lunch with them, interacting, chatting, that was very important I tried to support her - to talk to her but then it's difficult because you have to be careful that you're not seen as being cliquey with the students

Similar to acculturation, social integration can be very much dependent on context but, in addition, it is mediated by the students ability to develop relationships with supervisors and colleagues The student may develop an excellent understanding of the culture in the unit but an inability to develop good relationships with the people within it severely hinders integration Jo attributed his downfall on the course and his consequent failure to gain entry into the OT profession, at least partially, to his shyness which led to an inability to develop relationships and therefore to integrate

It's not really a question of preparation, it's just my manner The opportunities were there to integrate but I should have pushed myself more, looking back It's something I need to get round My first educator he'd say things like 'I want you to take more of a role in this interview' but it was difficult for me I felt very much like an observer It was my fault, I'm sure he didn't want it to be like that I think the opportunities were there to integrate - that's what he wanted I felt more like part of the team when I wasn't on show not being assessed It depends on how well you get into the set The character you live up to

Although Jo knew what was expected of him he was unable to respond by integrating into the context he describes, unlike Paula who began to associate

more with the team in the workplace than with her peers Jo could not act the part that to him would have been false in view of his shyness even though he was aware that he was being assessed on how well he integrated

It may be argued that integration is always conditional in that students need to fulfil certain expectations to become assimilated However, even some of the most competent students struggled to achieve full integration, for instance, where their status precluded them from involvement in certain meetings In other situations limiting factors were less tangible, possibly being attributable to differences in personality, as Dan described

I didn't know how to take her [his educator] so I just tried to stay in her good books There was a definite divide between you're the student and I'm the educator I was welcomed as part of the team but I was always the student

Advocates of situated learning argue that social integration subsumes task mastery as the key to occupational socialisation (Lave & Wenger, 1991 31) and that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" This view is certainly supported by insights gained in the context of this study, where students held the view that only when they began to feel more integrated into a unit could they really begin to apply and extend their knowledge and skills The impact of feeling well integrated on the ability to function within their developing roles as OTs cannot be underestimated, as Carol and Janet's experiences illustrate

The basic grades were talking things over and they actually asked me to help them make a decision on something the other day I thought that was really nice that they wanted my input So I feel very much part of the team and very comfortable
[Carol]

It was a small team only five OTs and some were part-time They were all very welcoming and I felt I just seemed to fit in I didn't feel I had anyone breathing over me but it was a lovely balance because I felt that I had all of the support I needed to really apply my theoretical knowledge to practice
[Janet]

Both Carol and Janet highlight how they became successfully integrated into the teams that they joined and how feeling accepted helped them raise their performance, reinforcing the positive impact of perceptions of embeddedness, which have already been discussed in Chapter 5

The concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), central to situated learning, provides an ideal way of conceptualising how the OT students became integrated into practice Legitimate peripheral participation legitimates the position of newcomers as unqualified people with potential for social integration into a community of practice It is accepted that they will join and take a peripheral position and do more peripheral work, gradually becoming entrusted with more responsibility as they acquire the knowledge situated in practice, as Janet and Carol have described This way of understanding learning incorporates the unintentional rather than deliberate and as such highlights the unpredictable nature of professional socialisation in the practicum However, in addition, I suggest that the student OTs illustrate that gradual increased participation depends on establishing good working relationships, which in turn enhance performance because social interaction means that the passive internalisation of knowledge, skills and attitudes becomes less tenable

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on how the OT students began to establish a sense of them becoming OTs. However, the process of negotiating a way through the four primary tasks of socialisation, task mastery, role clarification, acculturation and social integration was by no means straightforward. Superficially, it would be feasible to suggest that students were very much shaped by the socialisation process, merely ‘fitting in’ (Melia, 1987: 126) to a well-established mould. However, as I have shown the construction of selves so dependent on social interaction is far from straightforward (Harter, 1997). The critical factor impacting on identity development, which I argue cannot be underestimated in the context of professional socialisation, is the influence of other people and the need to gain their approval. Subconsciously through ‘acting’ the part, students were, in effect, internalising normative behaviours, which meant that they gradually began to feel like OTs.

Clearly this led to a tremendous sense of achievement for the OT students who, one may say, were empowered through this new sense of self. However, critiquing research findings on the impact of socialisation on nursing students, which emphasises “the overwhelming positive outcome – feeling[s] of confidence, self-awareness and empowerment” (Howkins & Ewens, 1999: 47), I argue that socialising forces are both empowering and repressive. The deterministic aspect of professional socialisation may in itself be empowering because it provides the individual with definite boundaries within which to operate. Nevertheless, such empowerment may compromise individual agency.

In some instances, social practices were not so readily internalised. Some students, aware of being continually assessed whether on their competence to perform a task or how well they integrated into the team, deftly learned to 'perform' in accordance with expectations. This is to be expected if impression management is accepted as a fundamental component of all social interaction (Goffman, 1959/1971, Schlenker & Weigold, 1992) although in some cases it involved the creation of what often felt like false selves.

I have illustrated how students learned to adapt to different educators, varied demands and contexts, typical according to Baxter Magolda (1999) of individuals whose identity is externally defined by others. The initial period of professional socialisation within the practicum is fundamentally relational, it is a period when students become immersed in practice and are socially constructed through their immersion. One may argue that in the context of professional socialisation, identity is necessarily externally defined and therefore students should be expected to adapt in certain ways if they wish to gain entry to the profession. However, as I have shown, a process premised on shaping people in this way can create tensions for those people with an already well-established internal sense of self. These people found themselves confronted by the need to reappraise and reconstruct selves.

I suggest that by the end of the course, several students began to make the transition from external to internal definition, as they synthesised external definitions offered by others with their own internal self-definition (Jenkins, 1996: 20). Others seemed to be content that they had made the grade in the eyes

of others, reinforcing how it is not enough to assert an identity, what people think about us is as important as what we think about ourselves (Jenkins, 1996) These students were those who were less likely to consider that they had made the transition to becoming OTs and were content to continue to act like students until they crossed the threshold into professional practice proper These students will need post college experience for an internal sense of self to mediate the effects of external definition (Baxter Magolda, 1999)

Nevertheless, during their time in the practicum, all of the students developed some sense of professional identity, although this was by no means the same sense and was still very much open to change My findings support previous research (Du Toit, 1995, Alsop & Ryan, 1996, Thompson & Ryan, 1996), which has suggested that the practicum is the context for professional socialisation Moreover, following Berger, I argue that it is the context in which identity is “bestowed in acts of social recognition” (Berger, 1966 117)

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Conclusion

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss how my thinking has developed from my introductory starting position, in terms of substantive and methodological understanding, and how the study advances knowledge of professional socialisation beyond that of the generic work previously cited. In addition, given that continuing education is an applied discipline, the chapter discusses the implications of new insights for two important audiences: the practice base of professional education, including both university tutors and practitioners responsible for students in the workplace, and future OT students.

Several areas of potential theoretical development and further research are identified throughout the chapter. Although I will avoid any attempt to generalise my findings to other professions, it is my belief that parallels can be drawn, particularly within other healthcare professions. However, regardless of specific professional context, the complexity of professional socialisation highlighted by this study, merits greater attention in terms of future research. I begin by reviewing the original aims of the research and providing a brief summary of its findings.

Insights into the Professional Socialisation of OT Students

My primary aim throughout the thesis has been to analyse the process of professional socialisation in order to understand more fully the means by which OT students may be shaped into professional people. Subsumed in this aim were two secondary aims: to question and challenge professional socialisation as a

matter of routine induction of passive and willing students into the OT profession, and to explore the ways in which professional socialisation impacted on the selves of the student so as to develop some appreciation of the lived experience of becoming a professional person

I have argued that professional socialisation entails a highly deterministic process of social construction as students are introduced to 'social practices' within the profession (Michael, 1997 315) The nature of social practices has been explored and professional socialisation shown to be very much dependent on social interaction, which contributes to the construction and reconstruction of new identities. Diverse influences of others, not least fieldwork educators, combine to result in an identity that is, at least in the first instance, externally defined (Baxter Magolda, 1999)

The need to gain approval of others is a prime concern, which motivates students to 'act' according to perceived expectations so that tactics and strategy become part of 'performing' as an OT student. Students learn to 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1993) which, although closely prescribed by the profession, cannot totally stifle a sense of agency manifest in the varied extent to which discourses and practices are taken up. While some students will begin to inwardly conform to expectations, others will merely comply.

The extent to which other people shape the student into a professional person defines professional socialisation as fundamentally relational. Identification with discourses and with people who may act as role models is crucial because it

precedes the development of a professional identity. However, because discourses are diverse and frequently contradictory, identification is fraught with uncertainty. The importance of relationships in the context of transition and identity development is evident in the reliance of students on other people as a source of support and stability, for their capacity to mediate uncertainties and validate developing identities.

New Directions for Theorising Professional Socialisation

I suggested early in the thesis that professional socialisation has previously been a taken-for-granted yet fundamental aspect of professional education, which deserved closer scrutiny at theoretical and practical levels. I have drawn on different levels of theory from general and abstract to more specific explanations (Ely et al, 1997), or substantive theories that ‘hover low over the data’ (Schwandt, 1997: 160) to understand the process of professional socialisation in greater depth than has been achieved through previous studies. At this point I consider the contribution of the data to three specific theoretical issues, which might underpin further research: structure and agency, the social construction of professional identity, relationality.

Structure and Agency

I have argued that at a theoretical level professional socialisation is the process by which OT students are subject to influences that socially construct for them what it means to be an OT. Previous accounts have focused heavily on structure to the extent that it assumes a deterministic position leaving little scope for agency. However, my study indicates that initial professional socialisation of OT students

is far from a straightforward and unproblematic prescription for routine induction, or colonisation, as is implicit in previous studies. My own in-depth analyses, which have been absent from previous studies that have focused on macro-issues, have revealed the subtleties of the process and most significantly that the possibility of personal agency is present even within what I have shown to be a narrowly prescribed socialisation process. For instance, students rapidly learn to perform in certain ways to gain approval of educators.

Although limited in scope, this thesis challenges the notion that OT students are totally malleable objects. In terms of how these findings relate to other professions it seems likely that OT students typify students from other professional disciplines, although the extent to which they exhibit personal agency may differ. Further research, possibly outside the healthcare disciplines - in teaching, for example - might reveal even greater capacity for personal agency in other cultural or institutional contexts.

Discovering the ways in which students adapted to the processes they were undergoing, utilising tactics and strategies to present their best possible 'front', was exciting for me and I argue empowering for students. Although the notion of research having the capacity to empower has been critiqued (Scheurich, 1997), the potential for increased knowledge through involvement in research cannot be denied. For the OT students this meant developing a self-awareness of their own abilities to use tactics, leading to a perceived sense of agency.

However, my initial stance of considering a balance between structure and agency has been moderated latterly. Moreover, I have come to consider the structure/agency binary as operating on a continuum. At certain stages in a career, such as during initial professional socialisation, structural influences are likely to be more predominant with only very limited opportunities for human agency. However, notwithstanding the need for the profession's regulatory powers, a greater balance may be achieved once licence to practice is gained. Within OT it seems likely that the interplay between structure and agency will be influenced by context, such as specific undergraduate courses and particular workplaces settings. Although the interplay between structure and agency as it impacts on the career of an OT may differ considerably to the experiences of other professionals, the notion of movement on a continuum is likely to be equally applicable.

The idea of a dynamic interplay between structure and agency highlights the tenuous relationship between professional continuity and change. At an ideological level, if we believe that professional socialisation should be about replication and social control, its normative effect is invaluable in maintaining a certain amount of stability within the profession. On the other hand, some scope for agency will facilitate change and development of the profession through the production of forward-thinking graduates that may otherwise be stifled by an over-oppressive regime. Modifications are likely to be made over time, as new shared understandings are negotiated through ongoing dialogue, resulting in a continual, if very gradual redefinition of aspects of professional practice. OT is a profession that may be said to be particularly open to change as the incorporation of alternative therapies, such as Sensory Integration Therapy (Fairgrieve, 1996),

into the OT scope of practice illustrates. Other professions, such as physiotherapy may be more conservative, although special interest groups (SIGs) have recently emerged in areas such as aromatherapy.

Because economic, political and social forces impacting on all professions will vary, it seems likely that the degree to which consolidation or change is required will fluctuate. In the climate of constant change that characterises contemporary health care, initial professional socialisation probably provides one of the valves that regulate and control the rate of professional change. Furthermore, it could be that evidence of changes in scope for human agency or close regulation post-qualification, may reflect shifts in professional identity and status, innovative potential and professional confidence.

In summary, professional socialisation should be seen as a continuous process of which the initial undergraduate stage is only the beginning. There is a dynamic interplay between structure and agency throughout the professional socialisation process that is likely to be course, working context and profession specific. Fluctuations on a structure/agency continuum will depend on temporal factors associated with economic, political and social change.

The Social Construction of Professional Identity

Social constructionism has offered me a means of exploring the tensions between structure and agency in the undergraduate context. However, I have come to acknowledge latterly that the adoption of a postmodern or critical theory framework might have 'tuned' the research to the latest theoretical developments.

making it more cutting- edge However, these alternative perspectives could inform future research

In chapter 2 I alluded to the extreme and more moderate versions of social constructionism I have argued that the wholesale adoption of an extreme social constructionist position, which is insensitive to the nuances of professional socialisation, is untenable because it is over-deterministic A more moderate social constructionist perspective acknowledges that identities are shaped by social influences in a less radical way (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995) and provides a useful means of exploring and making sense of the processes involved

There have been few attempts to theorise the professional socialisation process and, to my knowledge, no attempt has been made to consider disparate socialising influences at a higher level of abstraction Studies that have been published in practitioner journals concentrate on practice issues This study enhances understanding of the dynamics of the professional socialisation process in several ways Much contemporary research in the field of professional socialisation has focused on specific aspects, usually within a single profession, giving rise to discrete ideas that tend to stand in isolation By adopting a social constructionist perspective this study creates a framework within which many of these ideas have been synthesised and developed For instance, role models have been highlighted as extremely influential in the socialisation process (Nias, 1986, Su, 1990, Du Toit, 1995, Fitzpatrick et al, 1996, Alsop & Ryan 1996) Immersion in practice (Jenkins & Brotherton, 1995) and exposure to language and culture

within the practicum (Alsop & Ryan, 1996), have been deemed to be the most effective ways of preparing newcomers. A common denominator to all of these socialising influences is the presence of other people and their capacity to shape the student through a variety of means. The generic work cited fails to identify these connections possibly because interaction with other people is an implicit life skill.

My study has shown how and why other people are so significant in the process. Role models are not merely influential but vital to identification processes. Immersion in practice and exposure to professional culture are significant aspects of preparation for practice but this thesis offers insight into why this is the case in terms of how social interaction impacts on identity. The notion that professional socialisation is a process concerned with the way in which identities are socially constructed is novel and offers a new lens for further research on professional socialisation. For instance, issues such as the trend towards inter-professional undergraduate education for healthcare professionals, mentioned briefly within this thesis, is one aspect of professional socialisation deserving further research which could be informed by the adoption of a social constructionist perspective.

In the same way that the subjective self has become a dilemma for self/identity theorists, a critique of my perspective on professional socialisation might highlight how the experience of the first person poses a dilemma for social constructionists. Despite varying conceptions of social constructionism ranging from moderate to more radical, social constructionists are, on the whole, resistant to making a shift from the position that self-experience is a social construction.

Wong (1999 80) maintains that ontological existence and inner experience of the first person self constitute a problem that social constructionists cannot resolve and, as a consequence, the individual is being denied “his [sic] right of self-expression and self-determination”

Similarly, Fisher (1995) argues that the most common criticism of social constructionism is that it tends to construe human beings as little more than malleable objects easily moulded by societal influences. Although this sentiment resonates with empirical evidence drawn from the early professional socialisation studies (Merton, 1957, Becker et al, 1961), it is not supported by my study. My research provides additional empirical support for those who suggest there is a need for social constructionism to devise a new epistemological framework for inquiring into the ‘inner experiences’ of the individual subject, (Wong, 1999) that would pay greater attention to issues of human agency

Relationality

Initial professional socialisation has previously been acknowledged to be a complex and rather “nebulous business” (Tompson & Ryan, 1996 66). I have highlighted the importance of social interaction in the construction and reconstruction of selves inherent in the professional socialisation of OT students. Furthermore, I have established an understanding of the dynamics of the professional socialisation process through relational concepts such as holding, attachment and embeddedness. Although relationality has provided a lens through which identity development has been explored in previous research, consideration of professional socialisation from a relational perspective is novel

The impact of social practices on professional socialisation, such as face-to-face interaction between therapist and student, or student and client, is, as I have shown, profound

Research (Posthuma & Posthuma, 1973, Madigan, 1985, Sabari, 1985, Rozier et al, 1992, Danka, 1993) suggests that relationality may be a particularly significant feature of OT and OT education. The impact of social interaction on developing identities may therefore be greater for OT students than, for example, physiotherapy students. However, at a superficial level of analysis, contextual factors such as the practicum operate in a very similar way for physiotherapy students so some similarities are likely to be found, even if the two professions are underpinned by different philosophies. The impact of social practices in relation to students within other disciplines would provide an interesting area for further research.

Although my focus has been on the initial professional socialisation of OT students, my findings have implications beyond studenthood, in other words, for the ongoing development of OT practitioners and the profession. Benner (1984) supports the notion that professional socialisation continues and extends well beyond experiences as an undergraduate student, in which case it seems feasible that social practices will continue to be influential in shaping the junior professional. Therefore an understanding of the dynamics of social interaction could well inform research on continuing professional development and lifelong learning within the profession.

Impact on Methodological Understandings

Having discussed the development of my substantive understanding over the journey that I have travelled in conducting this study I shall now reflect on how my thinking has changed in terms of methodological understanding. I discussed in chapter 3 my eagerness early in the study to identify with a research approach that lent itself to exploring first-hand experiences of the professional socialisation process. Although I engaged with the philosophical underpinning of alternative approaches, my concern was primarily the choice of an appropriate method. Despite addressing epistemological, ontological and methodological issues, which constitute the three elements of a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), my appreciation of their intangible impact on the research was in its infancy.

Throughout the various stages of the research I have been torn in several directions by tensions arising between interpretative and positivist paradigms underpinning the study. The tensions are due to several factors: the influences of my disciplinary origins associated with the sciences, the appeal of research approaches such as narrative enquiry for their creative potential, the imperative to observe the call for rigour in qualitative research. The initial tendency was to attempt to identify with either interpretative or positivist traditions to avoid becoming entangled with philosophical discussions about combining approaches. I dealt with this by positioning my research within the interpretive tradition. However, while deeply embedded ontological and epistemological assumptions associated with my biography were not so easy to ignore or actively exclude, some went unrecognised.

As a consequence several anomalies exist. For instance, in chapter 3 I consider the impact of my own biography on the research while being aware that “the natural science model does not permit the researcher to become a variable in the experiment” (Brewer, 2000: 20). I talk at some length about research relations but cannot help showing an awareness of the notion of distance, which I claim to have established by setting ground rules that precluded taking on a counselling role. My account of research methods incorporates an initial discomfort with a lack of structure that facilitates the accumulation of verifiable facts (Bryman, 1988), yet my concern was to access rich and deep, rather than hard and reliable, data. Even the adoption of the two approaches to analysis, one giving rise to a ‘well-formed argument’, the other to ‘a good story’ (Bruner, 1986: 11), maintains a foot in each camp, signifying a wish to explore innovative modes of representation yet a reluctance to break free from more conventional approaches.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) consider the implications of each paradigm for novice enquirers. Of positivism they say novices are trained primarily in technical knowledge of measurement, design and quantitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln consider that those who subsequently explore interpretative approaches will need to be re-socialised into a totally different way of conducting, analysing, interpreting and writing research that facilitates an appreciation of paradigmatic differences. My re-socialisation has occurred during the course of conducting this study and only now at its conclusion can I look back and see where I have come from. My journey has involved a perpetual feeling of discomfort that is illustrated through issues of involvement or distance, claims of being an insider or an outsider, omitting or writing the self into the account.

However, it is hardly surprising that it is not uncommon for interpretivists to struggle to maintain the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity, engagement and objectification (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) in their research, if, in assuming that there are 'facts' out there or a 'real' reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), qualitative research is operating within positivist notions of social reality. Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 12) identify "seven moments of qualitative research" that they argue are consecutive but also operate simultaneously in the present, which indicate that old concerns do not go away. In the context of the complexity of perspectives within and between paradigms perhaps I can be at least partially forgiven for the tensions that are evident in this account. Reflexive critique might involve re-writing my journey in terms of the "[r]elationships between the aesthetic and scientific, or between the 'positivist' and 'interpretivist'", which, according to Coffey (1999: 10), have been detectable for many years. However, this may be a future project.

Another aspect of the research worthy of reflexive attention is the management of my own performance throughout the study and its implications for the data and its interpretation. In chapter 3 I discussed how, not unlike the students involved in my study, I too engaged in impression management. Coffey (1999: 5) argues "[t]he researcher identity is to be 'managed', amended and constructed in order to facilitate the research process", which sounds very instrumental but then it seems obvious that researchers should be concerned with creating good field relations. However, the impression management that occurs within the research relationship, such as presenting oneself as a fellow student or a concerned listener, has implications for the conversations it encourages.

For example, I have alluded to the tensions of juggling my academic and research personae and my attempts to minimise the impact of the former. However, without doubt some interview conversations were fuelled by students' perceptions that their opinions could in some indirect way feed into change within the course. Had I been a total outsider to the institution these conversations could well have taken a different, either more or less critical, course. I was aware that being a physiotherapist might adversely influence the extent to which I was accepted, due to the tensions that arise between the underlying philosophies of OT and physiotherapy and boundary struggles occasionally evident in practice (see chapter 1). Fortunately my professional roots did not seem to have any obvious adverse effects, possibly because I presented myself as someone who identified very closely with the philosophy of OT even as a physiotherapist, in Coffey's (1999: 27) terms a 'conceptual anomaly', which again may have influenced the data.

As the study progressed I found myself genuinely wanting to share experiences, not only telling students more about my life in what felt like a reciprocal relationship, but lending students books, buying tickets for choral recitals and attending the very emotional memorial service for Simon, the student who died during the second year of the course. Notwithstanding implications for data generation, personal investment of this kind also has implications for data interpretation and the written account. For instance, I am aware that I grew to like and identify more closely with some students than with others and, having discussed the tendency for 'portraits' of individuals to be largely celebratory

(Stronach & MacLure, 1997), I can see how some voices may have been privileged over others

Although I liked Simon, an in-depth account of his aspirations has been actively omitted from the account. My own sorrow that he did not manage to achieve his aims has been managed, rightly or wrongly, by presenting very limited snapshots rather than by configuring a story around his experiences on the course. The story was not started because it could not be satisfactorily concluded. There is no way of legislating for the way in which personalities impact on interview conversations or the way in which they are interpreted. Likewise research is not devoid of emotional overlay, although at least being alert to this means that an active effort can be made to write this into a critically reflexive account.

It is tempting when interpreting data to be strongly influenced by first impressions and therefore look no further. However, one aspect of managing performance in terms of interpretation involves being motivated to consider alternatives. This can only be achieved by being disciplined enough to read, re-read and re-think, processes in which I engaged through two different types of analysis. Moreover, the importance of reflexivity cannot be over-estimated. According to Coffey (1999: 127), “texts are authored and peopled by a participating self”. However, recognising the self as both a source of experience and a research tool with the capacity to influence data generation, interpretation and representation is crucial.

Reflexive analysis of the increased understandings brought about by the research would not be complete without mention of my attempts to engage with ‘storied knowing’ (Bruner, 1986) through the use of narrative analysis. Storied knowing is particularly pertinent to OT practice (see chapter 3) and therefore of specific relevance in the context of this study. However, narrative analysis is an innovative technique that offers greater possibilities for the exploration of complex processes of a varied and diverse nature. A collection of stories, like chapters in an edited book, each offering a different perspective around a theme, has great potential to develop understandings of complex social phenomena. I hope to further develop my skills in order to exploit this technique to a greater extent in the future and would encourage others to consider it not least for its capacity to help re-socialise the novice researcher into interpretative research.

Partnerships in OT Education?

My research did not include interviews with university tutors or fieldwork educators, instead my focus was solely on students’ perspectives. However, the students’ experiences highlight the implications of being caught between tutors and educators, both of whom ultimately work towards socialising students into the same profession. Thus insights from the study are of importance to the practice base of OT education.

Barnett, Becher and Cork (1987) suggest that professional education involves a partnership between the university tutor, whose main contribution is the development of intellectual skills, and the practitioner who is responsible for the development of practical skills. Such distinctions are far too simplistic and

certainly underplay the role of practitioners. As with other studies (Du Toit, 1995, Alsop & Ryan, 1996) my findings suggest that the workplace provides a highly influential context in which students can begin to experience practice. Recent research focusing on learning in the workplace (Eraut, et al 1998) found that, although organisational structure influenced learning, affective parameters were far more important. These findings lend support to this thesis, highlighting that the socialisation of the newcomer is heavily dependent on relational factors and interaction with the people who are encountered during *immersion in practice*.

Nevertheless, professional socialisation is not the sole responsibility of practitioners but a process that starts within the university. University tutors provide an initial framework of what being an OT may involve. They have the opportunity and, I argue, the responsibility to expose students to diverse discourses of practice, offering them a choice of ways in which they can position themselves in relation to such discourses. Tutors also encourage a questioning approach to knowledge and practice and by doing so nurture the development of reflexive awareness in students.

It could be argued that university tutors are sending students out into the practicum ill prepared for their reception by clinicians. The experiences of some of the OT students illustrate how some clinicians were open to their ideas while others were less so, provoking tensions. These findings are reflected in recent research (Barnitt & Salmond, 2000), which suggests that recent graduates have a more questioning attitude than may have been the case in the past, but that this

tends to be met with ambivalence in the workplace. Clearly, students and fieldwork educators occupy different motivational, experiential and emotional spaces, which may not be easily bridged.

Student OTs, who frequently commence their professional education with the notion that they are not academic, begin to develop intellectually during the course of foundation modules within the university. Their self-confidence in adopting a questioning approach to practice begins to increase *only to leave them* exposed and vulnerable once out in practice where it seems they are often expected to fit in without question. In other words, the university opens the mind of the student, which then becomes more narrowly focused once out in the practicum, a situation that provides the context for many tensions to come to a head. Not only are students faced with a totally new setting, but they are confronted by different ideals. It is little wonder that students find the transition from the university into practice leaves them with uncertainty and self-doubt.

University tutors need to retain an awareness of and sensitivity to the climate in which practitioners work and communicate this awareness to students. At the same time, if students are to gain the most from the time they spend in the practicum, practitioners have an obligation to keep abreast of wider issues impacting on the profession, such as the move towards evidence-based practice. If, as Eraut (1985) argues, continuing professional development impacts on the quality of practice and as a consequence on initial education, a heightened awareness of developments in practice and mandatory up-dating are likely to have implications for the professional socialisation process.

The workplace and individual fieldwork educators need to become fully engaged in the professional education process. Fieldwork educators who see the education of students as investing in the future of their profession are invaluable. That they are accredited for taking on the additional responsibility of a fieldwork educator role is crucial. The experiences of the students involved in my research suggest that there are some excellent educators who take their role very seriously while there are others whose influence is less than helpful. This perspective is supported by scepticism that guidelines are open to interpretation and that there are still practitioners who may make minimal efforts to develop the skills to be an effective fieldwork educator (Alsop & Ryan, 1996).

At grass roots level, university tutors and fieldwork educators, who each combine complex roles and expectations with regard to academic and professional commitments (Watson & Taylor, 1998), given a suitable forum, might benefit from engaging in regular critical debate about the nature of professional education. There is a need for increased understanding of the dynamics of the socialisation process and more explicit agreement to be reached on how newcomers are shaped into professionals if students are to be spared the uncomfortable experience of being pulled in two opposing directions. This is not to suggest that collaboration does not already happen or that consistency among socialising influences is necessary, as has been previously advocated (Sabari, 1985). To the contrary, tensions and uncertainties experienced by students when presented with alternative ways of understanding OT may help to develop their reflexivity and therefore equip them for dealing with the uncertainties of future practice.

Nevertheless, many of the issues outlined above, hinge on effective and on-going communication at an institutional and professional level. One might question whether professional up-dating, providing opportunities for increased debate and working together, are likely to make a great difference to the student experience when university tutors and fieldwork educators inhabit different social spaces and worlds. However, in sharing a common concern for the OT profession, both of these groups given the opportunity might see the potential in making a greater effort to develop a more collaborative approach to OT education.

The experiences of the students involved in this study highlight two specific areas where possible changes could be made to the benefit of the overall fieldwork experience of students. The first relates to the assessment of fieldwork placements, the second to social integration into the workplace. Although the fieldwork educator relates to the student as both a mentor and an assessor, students are more acutely aware of their role in assessment. As the students in this study illustrate, there is a constant awareness of the need to perform on placement and, as such, students probably do not always gain maximum benefit from working with a specialist practitioner. Questions go unasked and experiences missed where the student tries to maintain a facade of competence.

In one sense the fieldwork educator is the best person to formally assess the competence of the student. In another, concentration on the mentorship role may improve the quality of the learning that occurs on placement, even if the brief nature of the student and fieldwork educator relationship means that it differs to a classical mentoring relationship (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 1993). Fieldwork

educators provide the mirror through which students either come to see themselves as professional people, or confront their failures. Therefore, if fieldwork educators were able to focus to a greater extent on their mentorship role they may develop a level of reflexivity that would both enhance the student experience and their own personal satisfaction and confidence in their role as gatekeepers to the profession.

Although various people perform a 'holding' function for students as they progress through their professional education, the importance of the support of the fieldwork educator, particularly during the final fieldwork placement, cannot be underestimated. It is vital that fieldwork educators provide a 'good enough' holding environment for students, so as to achieve a balance between giving enough support without stifling the student by being over-protective. Advocates of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) argue that social integration is the key to occupational socialisation and certainly it seems that it is only when students begin feeling more integrated or embedded into a unit that they may start to apply and extend their knowledge and skills. Early integration is necessary in order that students gain the maximum benefit from their placement.

Although fieldwork educators play a key role in facilitating such integration, the whole team play a part in making the student feel welcome, accepted and perhaps above all useful. Because much seems to depend on the student's ability to develop relationships, particularly with their fieldwork educators, a collaborative model where the student works with the whole team may facilitate easier integration than a model which relies on the relationship between one student and

one educator. The one-to-one model is gradually becoming displaced by alternative models of fieldwork education, such as the group or long-arm model, in which the student is supervised from a distance (Alsop & Ryan, 1996). However, the experiences of students suggest that a collaborative model may offer slightly different and certainly important benefits in terms of enhancing social integration.

While the above issues are discussed specifically in the context of the initial professional socialisation of OT students, it is likely that similar tensions between university tutors and practice-based educators impact on the experiences of students on other professional courses.

Opening the Eyes of Potential Students

The majority of OT students embark on their undergraduate education with very little insight into how their initial socialisation into the OT profession will impact upon them. In the case of the students involved in my research, discussions towards the end of their course revealed that most of them had expected the course to be intellectually demanding. Yet, contrary to their fears, most of the students had coped well with this aspect of their professional education. Few students had begun the course with an awareness of the extent to which it would address aspects of affective development, in other words, equip them as people.

In terms of tangible outcomes, professional socialisation brought with it first and foremost a sense of increased confidence and belief in their own abilities, which extended beyond professional life; the students had become better at making

decisions and found dealing with situations both at work and in their private lives easier. Associated with increased confidence was increased assertiveness perceived to be a direct consequence of the course. In the eyes of their friends and family, their advice and opinions now seemed to carry more credence both in the professional world and outside. They had developed a sound knowledge base, which was as applicable in everyday life as in professional practice.

By the end of the course the students' previously held distinctions between personal and professional development had become very much blurred. Most of them realised that self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness were not only important attributes of the professional person but vital components of personal growth (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 1993). However, there was general agreement among the students that in terms of emotional investment the development of these attributes had proved far more challenging than the more straightforward accruing of professional knowledge.

In the context of considerable change and development, the sense of students' perceived sameness came across strongly. Where they acknowledged change, in some cases it was moderated through the notion that, rather than representing a new dimension of self, it was simply a development of a pre-existing trait, "something that was there just waiting to get out" [Janet]. This reaction to perceived change may highlight a possible reluctance to acknowledge fundamental change. It may also support the notion of self-plurality and illustrate how reflexivity provides a sense of continuity when selves are fragmented and multiple.

A transcendent unitary self is required to 'know' that the many voices or roles are part of self, and not, say, emanating from the furniture
The multiple self must have a reflexive dimension to define self as a self

(O'Connor & Hallam, 2000 239)

The students appeared to achieve a balance between change and stability. While some selves were open to reconstruction, the students closed down certain parts of themselves that they felt strongly they did not wish to alter. Further research on a larger scale may reveal differences in this respect between younger students who may or may not be more open to change than their more mature colleagues who exhibited a marked capacity to embrace change.

The OT students confronted the challenges they were to meet on the basis of a secure foundation of self, which I have argued has been maintained and enhanced primarily in relation to other people. I have highlighted throughout this thesis how partners, family, friends, fieldwork educators and clients both facilitate change and fulfil a stabilising function amidst change. The experiences of the OT students add support to the body of evidence suggesting that peer support is particularly important within the university context (Edwards, 1993b, Astin, 1996, Spouse, 1999).

I have illustrated how professional socialisation particularly within the fieldwork setting involves students in consciously or subconsciously applying tactics and being strategic in convincing fieldwork educators of their competence and commitment to their work. Varying degrees of openness in the relationship between fieldwork educators and students and its impact on students' ability to become embedded in practice would provide an interesting area for further

research. Nevertheless, it seems likely that most students probably learn to 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1993) to some extent in order to negotiate a way through the process and, even as junior therapists, they will no doubt have much to prove. Although rarely explicit, impression management is part of everyday life and part of professional life.

Ten of the twelve students who took part in the study were classed as mature students at over 21 years of age. Although from such a small sample generalisations are not possible, there is some indication that the professional socialisation process may prove to be a more difficult journey for mature students than for traditional entrants. This may take some people by surprise and certainly would be an interesting focus for further research. Despite the frequent added complication of family commitments, mature students are often thought to be in a more favourable position than younger students, having the benefit of more life experience and potentially fewer financial worries and social distractions (Stewart, 1992). In fact, the profession actively encourages mature applicants on this basis (WFOT, 1998). Yet the journeys of several mature students were less than smooth.

From the students' perspectives, problems were attributed to personality clashes, inadequate or inappropriate support during fieldwork placements, or to their own deficiencies. However, I argue that problems encountered could be at least partially due to the likelihood that mature students join the course with a well developed internal sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Negotiating the process of being externally defined by others challenges pre-existing notions of self.

Problems may therefore be symptomatic of tensions between existing conceptions of self that become compromised and in need of realignment, at least temporarily, with external influences. Obviously, further research would be necessary to explore this tentative suggestion but it may be that the benefits of maturity in terms of life experience are outweighed by the complications that maturity brings with it.

On the whole, the OT students involved in this study felt that they had been very well prepared to cope with practice and the inherent process of change and personal development. However, just as it has been argued the quality of educational programmes can best be judged retrospectively (Entwistle, Thompson & Tart, 1992), it may be that the effectiveness of the students' professional socialisation will only become evident after they have become immersed in practice as junior therapists.

A Final Word or a New Beginning

It is with some regret that my agreement with the students at the outset of the research stated that our research relationship would end when they left university and that it has so far been upheld. However, there are probably always things that would be done differently if the novice researcher could foresee where the journey might take them. I have since come to realise that I had been focusing on what was only the first phase of the professional socialisation journey. Other phases, probably equally as interesting and challenging, still lay ahead of the nine people who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree with honours in Occupational Therapy in November 1999. Having followed their progress for

three years I have missed hearing how they are fairing in their first posts I am aware that one student has already gained promotion and I find myself wondering if OT is what they expected and whether, having reached their goals of becoming OTs, it is what they wanted Perhaps now they would reflect differently on their professional socialisation as students with the benefit of a working knowledge of the profession to which they had been introduced

There is currently some interest in the experiences of newly qualified OTs during the early years of professional practice (Atkinson & Steward, 1997, Adamson, Hunt, Harris & Hummel, 1998, Sutton & Griffin, 2000) Not surprisingly, graduate performance and issues impacting on recruitment and retention are of prime concern Focusing on professional socialisation as an on-going process that continues well beyond qualification would allow research to consider issues of structure and agency, the social construction of identity and relationality, within the context of early professional life and beyond

For instance, I have argued that undergraduate professional socialisation is dependent on social practices and social interaction Borikar and Goodban (1989) have cited multidisciplinary teamwork, training, support and supervision as factors that would attract applicants to a new post Research into job satisfaction in OTs suggests that it is strongly linked with the work itself, specifically patient contact, helping others and working with co-workers (Burley de Wesley & Clemson, 1992) All of these factors indicate that relationality continues to be a significant factor in the development and maintenance of professional identity possibly linking continuing professional socialisation with retention

This link may be an important one to explore for the OT profession since within the UK OT is currently struggling with staff shortages and a high incidence of turnover within, and attrition from, the profession (Sutton & Griffin, 2000). There is clearly an urgent need to understand factors impacting on retention, which are likely to be complex but would almost certainly appear to revolve around the social context in which OT is practised. If, as research suggests, turnover and attrition exist at lower levels in OTs within their first year of employment (Rugg, 1996), an exploration of the experiences of newcomers would seem to be an important extension to understanding initial professional socialisation. Maybe the time is right to re-establish some friendships.

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Appendix 1

2. PHILOSOPHY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Occupational Therapy: The Philosophical Base

Occupational Therapy is a professional discipline which is based upon certain primary assumptions

- (a) Occupational Therapy is concerned with the individual's engagement in occupation in its widest sense including roles and purposeful activities
- (b) Occupational Therapy utilises a client-centred approach to individuals. The profession believes that each individual is unique and has the capacity to be motivated to take responsibility for the self
- (c) Occupational Therapy is concerned with individuals' abilities, strengths and their potential to achieve, change and grow
- (d) Occupational Therapists acknowledge the importance of teaching, learning and facilitating competent behaviours in the areas of everyday living
- (e) Occupational Therapists view health as a dynamic and multi-dimensional phenomenon which comprises physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the individual
- (f) Occupational Therapists believe that by enabling and empowering individuals they can achieve a personally acceptable lifestyle within their social milieu
- (g) Occupational Therapists value the problem solving approach to facilitate personal independence and autonomy
- (h) Occupational Therapists acknowledge the importance of and are committed to promoting a sense of well-being and enhancing the quality of an individual's lifestyle
- (i) Occupational Therapists acknowledge the impact of Society's influences upon individuals and work towards removing the attitudinal, environmental and discriminatory barriers which disable them

2.2 Course Philosophy

The course has been designed to provide an educational foundation for the ongoing personal and professional growth appropriate to the preparation of an occupational therapist. In acknowledging occupational therapy as a subject for study at Honours degree level, graduates will be, enterprising, able to think critically, innovative and able to work effectively and proactively within the context of their own profession and the multidisciplinary team

It is recognised that it is essential for occupational therapists to appreciate and understand the philosophy and functions of all related professions with whom they will work in practice. The opportunity for shared learning within the School of Health and Social Sciences is therefore valued.

The course will be founded upon the principles of, empowerment and the promotion of individual responsibility for learning, growth and accountability thus preparing graduates for the rapidly changing health and social care environment.

In recognition of these beliefs a student-centred approach will emerge as the students progress through the course. The students' use of knowledge, previously acquired skills and life experiences will be encouraged through a problem-solving framework which will complement the student-centred approach adopted thus preparing the student occupational therapists for; working in a complex environment, to manage the changes in service needs and enabling them to recognise their professional strengths.

Within the framework proposed emphasis will be placed on the cognitive skills necessary to achieve an honours degree and become a reflective practitioner. The process of critical thinking is fundamental, analytical and evaluative skills are key components of professional integrity and judgement.

It is intended that graduates from this course will be familiar with a wide range of subjects contributing to their professional work. Research is the underpinning guide to practice and students will, from the beginning reflect, critically, on issues relating to practice. The aim is to equip graduates with the theoretical perspective required in occupational therapy and for the level of critical thinking and academic rigour necessary to conduct sound research in, therapeutic interventions and practise and the advancement of the body of professional knowledge.

2.3 Rationale for the Course

The course has been designed to prepare students for the rapidly changing socio-economic and health and social care environment in which they will work as graduates. In order to achieve this the programme of studies will be flexible in nature, through a modular framework.

The educational process will develop in the student an understanding of individuals, their state of well being and their relationship to their surrounding environment. A student-centred approach will be adopted in order to promote the development of personal responsibility in learning in preparation for professional accountability in practice.

Whilst the emphasis of the course is on students achieving professional integrity and personal development, it is identified that the curriculum is built upon a well defined knowledge base. This knowledge base draws from a variety of disciplines including anatomy, physiology, sociology and psychology.

The integration of fieldwork education throughout the three year programme will enable the students to, develop the knowledge of the basic sciences and professional practice skills. The experience will encourage the transfer of learning principles and provide the opportunity to integrate theory with practice. One fieldwork education placement, in a health or social care setting, will be taken in each year of the course.

Fundamental to all three years of the course will be modules of study which focus upon the core skills and primary assumptions of occupational therapy, thereby reflecting the philosophical base of the profession. Consistent with this is the Course Team's awareness and consideration of community based practice, as recommended in the Louis Blom-Cooper Report (1989).

Aspects of information management and technology and methods of enquiry will be an integral part of the course thus facilitating evaluation and critical appraisal of personal, clinical/fieldwork and service needs. Management and policy issues will be studied to prepare students for, effective interaction within an organisation and adapting to an ever changing work environment. Such skills are also essential in producing attributes of enterprise namely, analytic thinking, problem solving, creativity, resourcefulness and autonomy in the Occupational Therapy graduate.

In planning this course, the team are committed to developing an understanding of the nature and implications of inequalities in society and their consequences on health and well-being. Throughout the course students will be encouraged to, recognise their contribution, realise their responsibilities and take appropriate action to promote equality. The educational process will create occupational therapists who are sensitive to and proactive in meeting the needs of individuals, irrespective of, their age, gender and sexual orientation, race, class, personal beliefs or health status.

To stimulate a deeper understanding of the related professions a fundamental principle of course design has been to provide opportunities within the structure for shared learning and shared teaching. The interdisciplinary nature of the School provides the environment to achieve this.

2.4 Aims of the Course

The course is designed to enable students to

- 1 Become enterprising graduates proactive within the context of occupational therapy
- 2 Be autonomous occupational therapy practitioners; independent reflective and analytical in practice
- 3 Acquire both higher order cognitive and professional/technical core skills of occupational therapy and be proficient and safe in the transfer of such skills to the practice setting (For definition of core skills see Annex 2)

- 4 Understand the importance of teaching, learning and facilitating individuals in competent behaviours within the areas of everyday life
5. Be responsible for their own learning, personal and professional development
- 6 Acknowledge their strengths (previously acquired skills and life experiences), the skills learnt through the programme of studies and the areas of need for future development and thereby plan, with academic guidance, an individual route through the undergraduate programme
- 7 Understand the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of health and ill health and the means by which therapists may, facilitate a sense of well-being, promote independence and empower and enable individuals in their achievement of an acceptable lifestyle, through engagement in occupation in its widest sense
- 8 Appreciate the nature and implications of inequalities in society and the consequences on the health and well being of individuals

2.5 General Objectives of the Course

From the aims of the course the general objectives were formulated as given below
Each objective is preceded by the following statement

"On successful completion of the course students will be able to"

- 1 1 Demonstrate their skills of critical thinking, in the evaluation of concepts drawn from academic and fieldwork studies, to inform and enhance their professional practice
- 1 2 Utilise research skills in therapeutic interventions and practice and the advancement of the body of professional knowledge
- 1 3 Contribute to the process of development in service delivery
- 1 4 Be instrumental in implementing new initiatives within the health/social care setting
- 2 1 Demonstrate a sound working knowledge of the underpinning disciplines (science, social science and technology) of Occupational Therapy in practice
- 2 2 Fulfil the responsibilities within the role of a newly qualified Occupational Therapist and enhance the quality of the service provided to patients/clients/service users
- 2 3 Demonstrate professional integrity and sound clinical reasoning

- 2 4 Recognise the ethical issues underpinning and impacting upon practice
- 2 5 Justify the rationale behind professional intervention
- 3 1 Undertake the process of critical thinking to inform judgement
- 3 2 Communicate effectively, both in verbal and written forms
- 3 3 Implement strategies for evaluating occupational therapy practice to ensure ongoing development and the monitoring of quality in service provision
- 3 4 Apply the professional/technical core skills of occupational therapy safely and proficiently (For definition of core skills see Annex 2)
- 3 5 Compile a portfolio of enterprise skills which will, reflect the individual route through the programme of study and highlight the areas of clinical/fieldwork speciality/expertise (This objective is related to aims 4 and 5 in addition to 3)
- 4 1 Demonstrate the skills of teaching and facilitation in promoting competent behaviours within areas of everyday living and strategies for ongoing development
- 5 1 Identify their future learning needs on the basis of their analysis and evaluation of attributes, skills, strengths in academic studies and fieldwork education
- 5 2 Apply the basic process of research to investigate topics and build academic resources
- 6 1 See note in 3 5 above
- 7 1 Respond to the health or social care needs of individuals, through a sound working knowledge of social constructs of health, the concepts of health, the pathology of ill health and the principles of health promotion and education.
- 7 2 Apply the principles of occupational therapy interventions and techniques in the practice setting to promote individuals' engagement in occupation in its widest sense including roles and purposeful activity
- 7 3 Demonstrate, skills of facilitation, advocacy and empowerment throughout the interactions and the application of the process of occupational therapy
- 8 1 Recognise discriminatory practice and uphold a commitment to, equality in practice and work toward removing attitudinal, environmental and discriminatory barriers

Position Statement:

The unique core skills of occupational therapy are the

- i) use of purposeful activity and meaningful occupation as therapeutic tools in the promotion of health and well-being.
- ii) ability to enable people to explore, achieve and maintain balance in the daily living tasks and roles of personal and domestic care, leisure and productivity
- iii) ability to assess the effect of, and then to manipulate, physical and psychosocial environments to maximise function and social integration
- iv) ability to analyse, select and apply occupations as specific therapeutic media to treat people who are experiencing dysfunction in daily living tasks, interactions and occupational roles.

(College of Occupational Therapists, 1994)

4. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Admissions Statement

The BSc (Hons) degree in Occupational Therapy receives in excess of 1400 applications per year. Competition for places is therefore very strong.

Applications are received from a number of entry routes:

- Higher degree
- First degree or a related professional qualification
- 3 passes at A level. Relevant subjects include, Psychology, Biology and Sociology
- BTEC National Diploma in a health related subject
- Access to health qualification
- GNVQ level 3 in a health related subject

In addition to the above all applicants should normally hold 5 passes at GCE/GCSE level at grade C or above.

When making a conditional offer the standard of attainment required will be made on an individual basis. In addition to having reached a certain academic standard, applicants should also demonstrate a commitment to training and an understanding of the role of the Occupational Therapist in practice.

4.2 Intake Numbers

The target number of students per intake will be between 85 and 90, of which a maximum of ten may be part-time in-service route students supported by the Education Commissioners.

4.3 Equal Opportunities

The intention is that this degree programme should provide the opportunity of further education for all applicants irrespective of race, gender and disability.

Occupational Therapy shares with other Health Care professions the difficulty of recruitment in terms of gender, race and class. Males and candidates from a range of multi-cultural groups tend to be under represented on the course. Every effort continues to be made to welcome all prospective candidates.

4.4 Part-time In-service Route and Advanced Standing

Applicants wishing to apply for the part-time in-service route or advanced standing route will be considered on an individual basis. Guidance interviews will be offered by a member of the Occupational Therapy Group to explore the potential for

accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L The basis for a Learning claim (credit or exemption from components of the course) and the procedures of AP(E)L will be discussed See section 4.6 for details

4.5 Associate Students

Associate students may be permitted to enrol for individual modules given evidence that they will benefit from the experience If the whole programme of study and its associated assessments are passed the module may be used to credit future studies Each module holds a rating of 15 credits

It should be noted, that due to the professional nature of the course some modules of study come under the category of "restricted" modules and entry is through registration on the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy only It is recognised that level 3 modules would be of value to qualified Occupational Therapist, who may wish to use a module of study as part of their professional development In such cases the "restricted" category would not apply

4.5.1 Ongoing Professional Development

It is envisaged that the Level 3 modules of the course will be attractive to occupational therapists who are in practice or non practising as a means of up-dating their knowledge and professional skills The assigned CATS ratings will enable them to use their studies as part of a professional development strategy and if desired progress to enrolment on either BSc (Hons) Health Sciences or BSc (Hons) Health Sciences (Occupational Therapy) courses available in the School of Health and Social Science

4.6 Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS)

Accreditation has been assigned to the course modules on the basis of 15 credits for each single module, according to University Guidelines

In the event of a student wishing to transfer to or from another programme, the credit of modules and exemptions will be considered However, direct entry at the same point as exit cannot be guaranteed due to various schedules of key study areas, particularly fieldwork education Each request will be discussed on an individual basis with the associated Course Leaders and discussions will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of each institution concerned

Transferees from non-occupational therapy courses will not be exempt from occupational therapy practice based modules of study Requests will be considered on an individual basis

BSc (HONS) OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
COURSE CONTENT : Titles and Position of Mandatory Modules
FULL-TIME PROGRAMME

SESSION A		SESSION B	
15 WEEKS		15 WEEKS	
UNIVERSITY BASED MODULES • Models of Occupational Therapy Practice Interactive Processes • Welfare, Health & Inequalities Module* Free Choice Module		UNIVERSITY BASED MODULES The Process of Occupational Therapy (11 weeks + 6 weeks Fieldwork Educ) Brain & Behaviour (11 weeks) Introduction to Research* (11 weeks)	
UNIVERSITY BASED MODULES Occupational Therapy Approaches to Ill Health (Mental Health) • Occupational Therapy Approaches to Ill Health (Physical Health) Methods of Research* Free Choice Module		FIELDWORK EDUCATION PLACEMENT II 10 WEEKS + • Clinical Reasoning (10 weeks + 5 weeks University Based)	UNIVERSITY BASED MODULES 5 - WEEKS Core options (Occupational Therapy Practice based)
FIELDWORK EDUCATION PLACEMENT III 14 WEEKS + • Research Studies		UNIVERSITY BASED MODULES Professional issues in O T Practice Management for Health and Social Care Professionals* Research Studies (continued) Free Choice Module	

YEAR 1

YEAR 2

YEAR 3

KEY : * denotes modules of study which offer the opportunity for shared learning between OT, PT & SW.

5.5.2 Core Option Modules

A selection of modules which focus on specific areas of occupational therapy have been designed to increase the depth of the students' knowledge. The status of core options has been designated to the modules to enable students to exercise a certain degree of choice in accordance with their personal and professional development plans, thus providing the opportunity for an individualised route through the course. The Course Team recognise that some students at an early stage develop specialist interests in preparation for their role as a qualified Occupational Therapist. The range provided does ensure a balance is retained in addressing the needs of physical health, mental health and social care provision. Figure 8 diagrammatically presents the range of core option modules available.

Figure 8 Course Content: Core Options Level 2

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupational Therapy Applied to Learning Difficulties (½)• Interactive Processes in the Practice Setting (½)• Information Management and Technology (½)• Orthotics (½)• Community Care and Occupational Therapy (½) <p>Module size (½) half module</p>
--

5.5.3 Free Choice Modules

Each of the students will be provided with the opportunity to select one module per year from a University wide range. It is however likely that students, due to the specific focus of this vocational course, wish to select a free choice modules from the range on offer in the School of Health and Social Sciences.

Academic guidance as detailed in section 8 will be available. The Course Team will, on enquiry, identify modules of study which can be categorised as recommended, having particular relevance to complement the occupational therapy programme.

Details of the variety of modules can be obtained through the computerised Academic Information System (AIS). The AIS has been designed specifically to inform students of the module details to enable an informed and independent choice to be made. The AIS is available through the Network system on all terminals within the School and the computer laboratories all have open access for students. Figure 9 diagrammatically presents the range of free choice modules, by Level, from the Subject Group in Occupational Therapy for student choice.

COURSE CONTENT : FREE CHOICE MODULES

**Flow chart showing range of free choice
modules by level from the Subject Group
in Occupational Therapy**

LEVEL ONE

SESSION ONE	Status : offered as free choice modules <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Promotion & Occupational Therapy• Purpose & Productivity through Occupational Therapy
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LEVEL TWO

SESSION ONE	Status : offered as free choice modules <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design Ergonomics and the Practice of Occupational Therapy ½ Therapy in the secure setting (½) Housing Policy & Design in Community Occupational Therapy Practice (½) Interactive Processes in the Practice setting (½)• Specialist areas in psychiatry (½) Drugs in Rehabilitation (½)• Information Management & Technology (½) Community Care and Occupational Therapy (½)
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LEVEL THREE

SESSION TWO	Status : Offered as free choice modules <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human Occupation and Productivity Occupational Therapy in Neurology (s) Ageing and Health (s)• Counselling Theory and Practice(s)• Dynamic Orthotics (s) Principles of Occupational Therapy Applied to Paediatric Practice (s)• Rehabilitation and Therapy Technology (s)• Understanding Human Movement(s)
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In addition a range of modules are offered across the School which focus on areas associated with professional practice and principles and policies of health and social care

KEY : Module size(s) single (½) half module

5.5.4 COURSE CONTENT: The Student Experience (requirements of the programme by level)

Full-time Route

In year one of the programme students will be expected to undertake a total of eight modules, of which

- i) seven will be mandatory (see figure 6)
- ii) one free choice (see Figure 9)

In year two of the programme students will be expected to undertake a total of eight modules of which

- i) six will be mandatory (see Figure 6)
- ii) one core option (see Figure 8)
- iii) one free choice module (see Figure 9)

In year three of the programme students will be expected to undertake the following

- i) all 5 mandatory modules and research studies for the Honours route
- ii) one free choice module (see Figure 9)

Part-time In Service Route

In any one year of the course students will be expected to take a maximum of five modules. Each student will be eligible for some accreditation of prior (experiential) learning, an example of the likely course content is detailed in Figure 7

Students will, as for the full-time route, undertake a free choice module at each level and one core option at level 2. The range of choices are detailed in Figure 8 and 9

Shared Learning

In each year of the course students will undertake at least one module of study which will be shared with students from other disciplines

Through mandatory modules, each student will have the opportunity for shared learning with physiotherapy (PT) and social work (SW) students accordingly

- Welfare, Health and Inequality (OT, PT, SW)
- Interactive Processes (OT, SW)
- Introduction to Research Methods (OT, PT)
- Management for Health and Social Care Professionals (OT, PT, SW)

5.5.5 Mandatory Modules: Statement of Purpose

Level 1:

During the first level of the programme students will be encouraged to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and management of self in relation to academic studies and fieldwork education. Cognitive skills of application and elementary forms of analysis and problem solving will be introduced through the study of basic concepts of research, the disciplines of knowledge and the theory and practice of occupational therapy.

- **Models of Occupational Therapy Practice**

This module seeks to examine the central values, beliefs and ethical concerns underpinning Occupational Therapy by examining the different frameworks that form the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the profession. The themes introduced in this module will be an essential pre-requisite to Fieldwork Education.

- **Interactive Processes**

Awareness of the self and others forms the basis of effective communication and the therapeutic use of self. The three components on this module, 'Interpersonal Skills', Working with Groups and Introduction to Counselling Skills, provide an opportunity for students to experience and review these fundamental aspects of professional life.

- **Welfare, Health and Inequalities**

The rationale for this module is threefold -

- Firstly in the light of current developments within health and welfare professions and the legislative changes (of care in the community), there is a greater need to foster joint learning and understanding of the complementary nature of professional roles and responsibilities.

Secondly, it provides a good opportunity to develop more interdisciplinary learning across the School.

- Thirdly, this module provides a means of focusing on the positive need to prepare students for practice in a society in which inequality has a profound impact for both health and welfare experience.

- **The Process of Occupational Therapy (Double Module)**
This module serves to assist the students in their development of a professional identity and enables them to learn to take responsibility for and manage themselves in both the academic and practice based setting. The Fieldwork placement as part of the module, allows the student to begin to develop and practice the core skills of Occupational Therapy in preparation for practice as a qualified Occupational Therapist in a health or social care setting.
- **Brain and Behaviour**
This module covers concepts of human development in social, psychological and physical terms. Students will draw upon previous experiences throughout this module, (and including the OT Biology Foundation Programme offered in the first session to support students who have not studied biology previously).
- **Introduction to Research**
By the end of this module, students in the health and social care professions should be able to demonstrate a grounding in research design, an understanding of the principles underpinning the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, the skills required to become critical consumers of research-based knowledge, an appreciation of the professional relevance of research.

Level 2:

During the second level of the programme students will develop an increased subject knowledge in research studies and the underpinning knowledge base of occupational therapy treatment techniques and intervention strategies. Models and theories will be analysed and more advanced problem-solving techniques employed, in both the University and practice settings. A greater degree of independence in learning will be expected and the students will be encouraged to focus, in their personal and professional development plans on areas of specialist practice.

- **Occupational Therapy Approaches to Ill Health (Mental Health)**
This module examines the aetiology, symptomatology and treatment of conditions arising from disturbances of psychological functioning. It builds upon foundation studies (level 1) of the course and experience gained in the fieldwork education module. It encourages students to critically analyse and evaluate the various health care delivery systems and to consider the future role of the Occupational therapist within this developing framework.
- **Occupational Therapy Approaches to Ill Health (Physical Health)**
This module provides an academic underpinning to fieldwork education and will link with current research. The module also provides the basis for specialist study in kinesiology, orthotics, pharmacology, and neurology which are studied in subsequent academic sessions.
- **Methods of Research**
The module provides specific preparation for the design and execution of empirical research within a Level Three research project. It will allow some

degree of specialisation according to the individual student's anticipated needs

- **Fieldwork Education II (Double Module)**

This module aims to facilitate the progression from observation and analysis of practice to participating in elements of the treatment programme under supervision. In addition this module aims to provide an alternative environment in which to pursue the study of areas previously identified by the University and on which subsequent learning can be built and to develop and demonstrate appropriate attitudes.

- **Clinical Reasoning**

This module will provide students with an opportunity to explore the process of clinical reasoning and to investigate the various types of reasoning undertaken by occupational therapists and other health care workers. It will provide a basis on which students can enhance awareness of their own reasoning ability whilst on fieldwork placement

Level 3:

During the third level of the programme the students should be skilled in using a problem-solving approach to academic studies and the process of occupational therapy whilst operating at a level of conceptual reasoning, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In both the University and practice setting students will be expected to define problems, formulate solutions and evolve intervention strategies. A greater degree of independence in learning will be a feature of the programme and opportunities for team work will be provided in preparation for practice in a multi-disciplinary setting

- **Fieldwork Education III (Triple)**

The students will be expected to demonstrate a professional manner, competent skills and be responsible in consultation with the Fieldwork Educator, for organising and directing their own caseload

- **Professional Issues in Occupational Therapy Practice**

The profession has recently accommodated radical changes in the health and social care context. It recognises this rapidly changing political and social scene is set to continue and this will necessitate ongoing review and redefinition of service delivery within viable environments

The radical changes in health and social care will inevitably demand of occupational therapists as with other health and social care professionals a positive response to a way forward therefore the need for occupational therapists to embrace current issues and recognise their impact on practice will be addressed in this module.

- **Management for Health and Social Work Professionals**

This module aims to enable the students to develop an understanding of the role of management in the organisation of contemporary health and social care. Through the examination of the appropriateness of the application of management theories and principles to health and social care settings the students will be given the opportunity to critically analyse the influence of management on health and social services. The students will also be encouraged to discuss the application of management theories and principles to their own professional role. Analysis of the issues surrounding inter-professional working and new forms of public sector management are also central features of the module.

- **Research Studies**

The aims of the research project is to encourage the student to work independently, in order to develop the design, organisational, executive and planning skills associated with research. The opportunity will allow the student to consolidate the research education offered during earlier modules. The research project will normally be developed within the students area of special interest whilst reflecting the Occupational Therapy ethos.

5.6 Personal and Professional Development

The concept of profiling has been adopted as an explicit and integral part of the curriculum for use in both university-based studies and fieldwork education components of the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy degree course.

In reality, the course is the beginning of professional life - part of the professional socialisation process. It forms the foundations from which students will develop. In the context of changing demands of health and social care and the constant advancement in the body of professional knowledge, learning must be a dynamic process for both student and practitioner alike. It is therefore, considered essential that a 'process' approach be adopted to personal and professional development.

From the philosophy and aims stem the pedagogic issues. Experiential learning techniques have been adopted widely in the course, to assist the students in the process of integrating theory with practice and accepting responsibility for their own learning. Kolb's learning cycle has been an influential factor in the development of the profiling system, it has been designed to be an integral part of learning and practice.

The course team acknowledge that the education of future health and social care professionals lies in a partnership between academic studies and professional practice based studies. Theory does not solely emerge from academic routes, through experiential learning techniques and research, theory emerges from professional practice. Theory is dynamic in its nature and the interaction between theory and practice is a crucial factor to be acknowledged in a profiling system.

Appendix 2

6.4 Responsibility of Fieldwork Educator

The primary responsibility of teaching in the fieldwork education placement rests with the fieldwork educator, who will provide the appropriate teaching, guidance and support to the student within the clinical or community settings. In recognition of this fundamental role, explicit educational requirements exist for those who undertake this role.

All fieldwork educators must undergo recognised courses of education. Additionally, a process of accreditation of both the place and the educator is available to encourage standards to be set and maintained.

6.5 Support

Fieldwork educators will be supported and educational standards monitored by staff of the school who have been designated to undertake this responsibility as their major professional role.

The school policy is to provide at least one visit per placement per student, although it is recognised that where specific issues arise further visits may be required. During these visits a review of aims will be undertaken in relation to the actual experience available for that student at that time. There will be in-depth discussion on modes of supervision and the fieldwork education strategies for teaching and learning. The student's view of his or her progress will also be discussed independently and any difficulties will be resolved through a three-way discussion. A further responsibility of school staff in this role, is to identify any specific staff developmental needs of fieldwork educators. In addition to designated fieldwork education tutor, other lecturers in occupational therapy will be involved in fieldwork liaison duties with a view both to assisting this process and enabling them to keep abreast of developments in practice.

Each student will be provided with a handbook for each year of the course containing organisational information, information about the curriculum, assessment and general expectations at that stage. In addition, however, a handbook will be prepared for the fieldwork educators, containing a full description of their roles and responsibilities and detailed advice about procedures required.

6.6 Accreditation

As part of the quality assurance process and College of Occupational Therapists (COT) recommendations an Accreditation Scheme for fieldwork educators has been developed by the Fieldwork Education Forum. This forum consists of fieldwork educators from a variety of geographical areas and specialities and Tutors from
University

This scheme will help to ensure a high quality for service users and student experience and be an indication of the placements achievements. Accreditation will be offered to all Fieldwork Educators and agencies and is designed to cope with existing fieldwork educators who offer placements as well as new and inexperienced occupational therapists wishing to develop their interests into the education process. Agencies can also become accredited by showing high standards of professional practice and a commitment to education.

Fieldwork Education Tutors will support any fieldwork educators during the accreditation process. An Accreditation Panel has been formed (from the Fieldwork Educators Forum) to examine all applications and to offer advice where necessary before awarding the Certificate of Accreditation where standards have been met. See COT Recommended Requirements for the Accreditation of Fieldwork Educators spp 166, December 1994).

Various courses are and will be developed to encourage and assist accreditation of placements and fieldwork educators.

Appendix 3

TITLE : INTERACTIVE PROCESSES - Interpersonal Skills

LEVEL : 1

MODULE SIZE : Single

MODULE STATUS : Mandatory

TOTAL HOURS : 150 (Interpersonal Skills 50 hours - 1/3rd)

NUMBER OF WEEKS : 15

GROUP SIZE : Lecture programme whole cohort
Practical laboratory workshop maximum 15 students

STUDENT ACTIVITY :

Lecture 5	Seminar	Guided Study
Tutorial	Laboratory	Self-directed 25
Workshop 20		

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS/PRE-REQUISITES:

Registration on B Sc (Hons) Occupational Therapy or B A (Hons) Social Work

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This component of the Interactive Processes module provides the students with the opportunity to explore their current level of interpersonal skills in the context of their future professional role. The programme is designed to enable them to identify their strengths and areas which they may wish or need to develop, to become an effective therapist, within the secure setting of the group in which they will work.

AIMS:

The aims of the unit are to enable students to

Appreciate the importance of ongoing personal appraisal in the life of a health/social care professional

Understand the fundamental principles of communication

OBJECTIVES:

On successful completion of this module the student will be able to

Identify personal strengths and areas for development

Know the principles underpinning a variety of coping strategies which can be applied within the intrapersonal and interpersonal context

Formulate a personal development plan using the Personal Profile

Recognise the impact of life events on individuals and their life roles

Begin to implement coping strategies to assist in their fulfillment of the various demands associated with the professional role

Review the effectiveness of coping strategies

Recognise the value of support networks

Apply the principles of effective communication, verbal, non-verbal communication and listening

Give constructive feedback

SYLLABUS OUTLINE

- Models of communication, interpersonal and intrapersonal
- Effective communication, verbal, non-verbal and listening
- Barriers to the communication process
- Concepts of reflection and facilitation
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Life events including loss and bereavement
- Life and professional roles
- Self-awareness and personal growth
- Personal development plans
- Attitudes
- Stress
- Coping mechanisms
- Assertion

INDICATIVE READING:

Argyle M, (1983) Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour, Pelican, London

Burnard P, (1992) Effective Communication Skills for Health Professionals, Chapman Hall, London

Parkes C M, (1986) Bereavement, Penguin, London

Porritt L, (1990) Interaction Strategies, Churchill Livingstone, London

Further References

Further reading will be provided during the workshop activities as themes emerge

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT:

Access to A114 or similar laboratory/room with carpet flooring to facilitate a conducive environment for experiential learning techniques.

Video equipment and television

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

A short series of lecture will be used to introduce the themes to be explored and the underpinning principles. In the workshop sessions brain storming, reflective techniques and role play will be used to facilitate learning. Students will be expected to be actively involved in the sharing of information within the group and respect the contribution of each member.

Small support networks will be encouraged.

A journal will be used to complement the work carried out in the workshops. Students will be expected to read the supporting information and carry out the activities within the journal prior to or on completion of the session. This will enable the students to work through the reflective process within a given framework.

ASSESSMENT MODE: COURSEWORK

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT:

FORMATIVE

As an integral part of the reflective work to be undertaken during the unit, students will be required to complete a Personal Profile (as detailed earlier in the Course Document). The profile will enable students to identify their strengths and areas for development. The Profile will be reviewed by the students with the group facilitator, on an individual appointment basis, toward the end of the unit. Students will be required to share their personal development plan with the facilitator during the review meeting.

SUMMATIVE

Written essay of 1,500 words which will cover aspects of interpersonal skills or working with groups.

OR

The assessment specified in the unit Introduction to Counselling

PASS REQUIREMENT. Module mark of 40% and successful completion of the formative assessment.

Appendix 4

University

BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy

Personal Profile II

SELF AND WORKING WITH OTHERS

Name:

Professional Development Supervisors:

Date:

Notes to students:

It is your responsibility to complete the profile, as a means of personal appraisal, prior to your termly consultation with your professional development supervisor. The profile will be the basis of the discussion.

Each section of the profile is to be completed, the guidelines in each section are designed to assist you in the process of reflection.

Guidelines:

Please ask yourself the following questions as you reflect upon your progress during this academic session.

1. Self-confidence and participation:

How do you feel you present yourself, to your colleagues, to the tutors?

Are you able to be confident and assertive?

How do you feel about your verbal skills and non-verbal behaviour and your ability to communicate?

Do you use your initiative?

How do you present yourself in the i) teaching role, ii) student therapist role, iii) facilitator role?

Are you able to take an active role on the course?

2. Problem-Solving and Implementing Change:

How do you analyse and evaluate difficulties?

What strategies do you employ to resolve problems/issues?

Are you able to be reflective?

Are you open to change?

3. Self-Management including Time management:

Are you able to identify your needs?

How do you set priorities for yourself and your work?

Are you able to identify stress/stressors?

How do you manage to implement mechanisms to reduce stress?

4. Study Skills:

Are you taking responsibility for your own learning?

How do you achieve this or why do you find it difficult?

How effectively do you balance your workload?

How do you manage the pace of academic work?

How much time do you spend on preparation of assignments/coursework?

Are you able to i) research topics, using the library or outside resources,
ii) read around subject areas, iii) share ideas with colleagues?

5. Working with Others:

Do you feel that you are able to relate to your colleagues, to tutors?

Are you able to listen, to share ideas with others?

Are you able to take an active role in group situations/teaching sessions?

Do you give constructive feedback to others, are you able to receive feedback appropriately yourself?

6. Strengths and Areas for Development:

From your own perspective, identify your strengths and areas for development.

What qualities do you think others see in you?

1. Self-confidence and Participation:

2. Problem-Solving and Implementing Change:

3. Self-management including Time management:

4. Study Skills:

5. Working with Others:

6. Strengths and areas for Development:

Self Development Strategies::

Please state your personal goals for the academic session/year and prioritise them, as necessary. Indicate the direction of your self development and the preparations/strategies you need to implement to achieve this.

Appendix 5

Interview Guides

The following five interview guides (selected from a total of eight) give an impression of the nature of interview conversations and how the types of questions changed as part of my own formative process. Although the sense of conversation is difficult to grasp from a set of questions, the guides give an indication of the issues with which both the students and myself were engaging. The questions in bold and italicised typeface introduce broad themes. Questions in normal type served as prompts for me and as a means of probing in greater depth where necessary.

The initial interview was aimed at getting to know each student. Questions were therefore largely general, factual and straightforward, although allowing scope for some depth of response. As the interviews progressed questions became increasingly open in terms of inviting varied and encouraging 'storied' responses. However, at the same time questions became more focused around identified themes. The final interview served as a re-cap, on several earlier conversations, and encouraged the students to look ahead to their step into professional practice.

Interview Guide

Number 1 (Interviews conducted 4-6 weeks into the course)

Preamble

Thank the student for volunteering to be involved

Talk through ground rules

Talk through documenting critical incidents

Confirm contact details

Could you start off by telling me something of yourself and your background prior to going to university?

Eg Place of origin
 Education (school, continuing education)
 Work experience
 Employment

How do you think an old friend would describe you?

Tell me something about why you opted to join the OT course?

Why OT?

What is your image of OT?

Why this particular course?

Did anyone help you make the decision to apply for OT?

How does it feel to have secured a place on the course?

How do you find university life so far?

What sorts of demands are you experiencing?

Have your interests changed?

Have you become involved in any university clubs, activities?

Do you feel that you have changed in any way over the past few weeks?

What do you see as your biggest challenge over the next few weeks?

Can I ask you about social ties? (explore relevant connections)

Eg Parents
 Brothers & sisters

Partners
Friends

What do they think about you going to university?

Have any of them been to university?

Do you talk about your day when you get home? (peers, friends, partners, parents)

Have you made new friends since joining the course?

Are they different to 'older' friends?

Commitments?

What roles do you have at present besides being a student?

Eg partner
 parent
 carer
 employee
 daughter/son

How does university fit in with life outside the course?

Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Talk briefly through my background

Interview Guide

Number 2 (Interviews conducted approximately 15 weeks into the course)

How have the past few weeks of the course gone?

Have you settled in?

Is it what you expected?

Is there anything that you really did not expect? Why?

How are you finding the work?

Can you see a point to what you are learning?

Is there anything that you feel you should be learning that you are not?

Is it demanding/challenging? (more so than previous courses?)

What coping strategies do you use to get through the work? (are these different to any previously used?)

To what extent are you expected to be self-directed in your learning?

How do you feel about researching a topic with minimal guidance?

How do you find the teaching staff?

What is happening over the next few weeks before you go out on placement?

How is university affecting life outside of the course?

What sort of time do you need to commit to working at weekends/evenings?

What impact is your being a student having on your partner/family/children/friends?

Conclude the interview with a discussion of students' critical incidents

Interview Guide

Number 3 (1-2 weeks prior to 1st fieldwork placement and immediately following an examination)

How have the past few weeks gone since we last met?

I know that you have just had an exam How do you feel it went?

Tell me about the placement you been allocated?

What sort of work will it involve?

What demands do you expect the placement to make of you?

What will be your role?

How do you feel about it?

Have you done anything like it before?

Do you envisage any problems?

Do you feel prepared? (knowledge, skills, confidence, able to go it alone)

Are there any other students in the same unit?

Will you keep in contact with any of the other students while you are away?
If so who?

How do you think you will learn on placement?

What will make the placement a success in your own view?

Have you any reservations?

Describe yourself next Monday morning when you arrive on placement

To what extent will being on placement change your normal home routine?

Interview concluded with a reminder to send any critical incidents to me by post

Interview Guide

Number 6 (final weeks of year 2 on return from 2nd fieldwork placement)

Well tell me all about it. How did your placement go? Did it live up to your expectations?

Tell me what a typical day was like

What was your fieldwork educator like? Did you get on with her/him?

What effect did this relationship have on the placement?

Who helped you get through it?

Do you think you used tactics to get through it? What sort?

What about the clients?

Did you have any real success stories?

How about problems? How did you cope with these?

Can you analyse your relationships with clients? Did they differ?

So what did you learn about being an OT?

Following your first placement we talked about the caring aspect of OT. Have your thoughts changed with more experience? Why?

Did you feel any more like an OT? Why was this?

What did you learn about you?

Is there anything that you will do differently next time you go off on placement?

Interview Guide

Number 8 (Final meeting)

I would like to use this meeting to look back over the course from where you were at our first meeting to being on the verge of finishing.

Is there a metaphor that you could use to describe the last three years?

What would you have changed if you could have done? Why?

What advice would you give to future students starting out?

We have talked at each meeting about the gradual changes that you have seen in yourself. Looking back what are the major changes and what do you think brought them about?

Can you pinpoint important turning points?

What are your thoughts on the relationship between personal and professional development?

Does becoming a professional person involve making some compromises?

Have you been shaped in any way? How?

We have talked about how important other people have been in helping you achieve what you have achieved.

Have different people helped in different ways?

Can you point to anyone who has had a special influence and explain why this has been the case?

How do you perceive OT and your role within it?

Can you see yourself fitting into it comfortably?

Are there aspects of OT with which you are sceptical, uncomfortable or with which you have yet to come to terms?

We spoke about OT as a caring profession. Have you had any further thoughts on the implications of caring for the profession, for clients, for you?

Where do you see yourself in another year's time in terms of your development?

What challenges do you think lie ahead?

What do you think of the course in retrospect?

Do you feel equipped to make the step into practice?

Do you think that the process of becoming an OT is similar in certain ways to the process that other students go through on other professional courses?